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THE TIMES
OF THE
GENTILES FULFILLING
AND
ZION'S TIME APPROACHING





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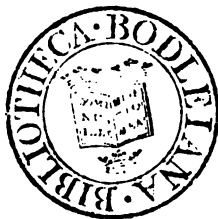
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PREFACE.

THE origin of the present publication was this. I requested my brother to send me for my own *private* perusal some illustrations of Prophecy already fulfilled, and to state at the same time his opinion as to the point in the evolution of the Divine Purpose at which our own generation is standing. The following pages were the answer to that request; and, as they are simple expositions of the Scripture itself, free from all speculative conjecture, I have thought that they might be useful in leading some to a soberminded study of the Prophets.

The profits of their sale will be devoted partly to the maintenance of two British Day Schools

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—one in Greenwich, and one in Deptford—and partly to the support of the Local Auxiliary to the London City Mission. They are sent forth with the sincere prayer that, through the grace of the Divine Blessing, they may contribute to the promotion of these benevolent designs.

EDWARD ABSOLOM.

WOODLAND'S LODGE, BLACKHEATH,

February 10th, 1860.

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tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.—125.

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CHAPTER I.

2 PETER i. 19.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy ; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.

THE first coming of the Lord and Saviour when, through the medium of His mysterious incarnation, He, as the Son of God, was made flesh and dwelt among us, has long since become one of the records of history. It was once a prophetic announcement—once one of “The things to come” which the Spirit of Christ signified beforehand when he spake by the mouth and the pen of his holy prophets of the sufferings of Christ, but now, those sufferings having been actually endured, and Christ, as the great Mediatorial Substitute, having made his soul a

real and effectual offering for sin, it has ceased to be a prophetic announcement, and is become an historical fact.

Not so, however, the coming in his majesty when, through the medium of his illustrious manifestation, the same Christ shall be revealed as the Son of Man in His glory. That is still one of the things which shall be hereafter, and, together with the events by which it is to be introduced, forms the subject-matter of the Scriptures of the prophets—as to which Scriptures we observe from the passage now before us.

1. The Fact which is here asserted, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy,”

2. The Duty which is here prescribed “Unto which ye do well that ye take heed,” and

3. The Caution which is here added, “As unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”

And may that Spirit of Inspiration, whose alone it is to search all things, yea, the deep things of God, vouchsafe to be at this time our instructor and guide, and use that which shall now be advanced as an instrument of commending to us a due and sober-minded improvement of God's prophetic truth.

1. The Fact which is here asserted, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy," in which expression we are reminded that there is a portion of the volume of the book which is, in respect of its own proper and peculiar designation, "the word of prophecy,"—in which the events as yet pertaining to futurity are contained,—the mind of God in the measure which has seemed good unto himself disclosed unto his children,—the counsels which must otherwise have remained dark and hidden and impenetrable in the bosom of the Eternal unveiled,—and the purpose unfolded beforehand which the Most High

purposed in himself by Christ Jesus before the world was.

For the term, as it is here employed, is to be understood in its largest and most comprehensive signification, not only those books of the Holy Scriptures which we are accustomed to call the books of the prophets, but also those many passages which are interspersed in a more detached and unconnected form throughout the pages of the divine testimony, being included in the word of prophecy which the man of God here intends.

This Word, thus understood, is a sure word, "We have a sure word of prophecy." There is no uncertainty in it, no contingency. It is not the revelation of a purpose such as man's purpose is often found to be—not a purpose which, having been ill-considered at first, must needs be abandoned afterwards—not a purpose from which, under the

impulse of a fitful change, the designer may suddenly turn aside—not a purpose which, with the most earnest desire and intention of carrying it out, the author of it may be unable to accomplish, but the purpose of One who sees distinctly the end from the beginning; of One who has all creatures under his control; of One who is himself an inhabitant of eternity; of One with whom is “no variableness neither shadow of turning,” and therefore a word on which a firm reliance may be reposed, seeing that there “shall be in their season a due performance of all the things which have been spoken by the Lord.” “A *sure* word.”

Nor only so, but a *more* sure word also. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy,” which term of comparison has respect to the verses immediately going before. The words are these, “We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made

known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, and this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy.” When therefore our passage is taken in its connexion, it is as though the apostle had said, I have assured you, dear brethren, that if ye do such and such things ye shall never fall, but that so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. For Jesus Christ, the Lord and Saviour, has a kingdom. I myself and the two disciples who were with me on the mount of transfiguration were eye-witnesses of his majesty, when his face did

shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light, and when we heard the heavenly voice which declared him to be the well-beloved of the Father. That voice and that vision have been to us, who witnessed them, decisive assurances of the honour which awaits him at the time appointed of the Father, and they enable us to affirm, beyond the possibility of our own doubt in the matter, that the glory which is to be revealed in him is not a fable cunningly devised, but a fact abundantly guaranteed. Not that these, however, furnish the only ground, or even the main ground of our persuasion, for we have also a more sure word of prophecy. The testimony which was then vouchsafed was afforded to none other than ourselves, and, after the voice had been heard, it ceased altogether, but the testimony which issues forth from the prophetic oracles is a voice which multitudes, innumerable multitudes, have

heard ; a voice which perpetually abideth ; a voice which, by means of successive fulfillments from one generation to another, is receiving new confirmations every day ; a voice which is always gathering to itself a more persuasive authority—" a more sure or more *assuring* word of prophecy."

2. The Duty which is here prescribed, "whereunto ye do well that ye take heed," out of which words there at once arises the important inquiry whether they are addressed to the ministers of Christ only, or to the members of Christ generally, an inquiry to which we can have no difficulty in rendering an immediate reply, if we refer to the terms in which the epistle itself is introduced. "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, grace and peace be multiplied unto you."

The words therefore now under our consideration are addressed not to the ministers of Christ only, but to the disciples of Christ generally, even to all those who have received from above as the gift of God that faith which conveys unto all to whom it is vouchsafed a discharge from the divine wrath, and a restoration to the divine image, and the enjoyments of the divine service, and the title deeds of the divine inheritance. They are all instructed that "if they take heed unto the word of prophecy, they do well."

How contrary, however, is the course which many of those, if not most of those, pursue, who nevertheless profess themselves to be disciples of Christ ! They do not indeed pass by the word of prophecy in the spirit of contempt, as others do who are ungodly in the spirit of their mind, but still they pass it by. They find in it things which are hard

to be understood, and they therefore allow themselves hastily and inconsiderately to conclude that there is nothing in it at all which it is possible for them to understand. Accordingly they leave it as an unsealed book, which it is not within their province to open, and are content to live and die unacquainted with much, very much, which the God of their salvation has seen good to communicate for their edification and comfort in the knowledge of Christ.

It was this very thing which Israel, as a nation, had guiltily done from age to age. They heard the Scriptures of their prophets read in their ears every Sabbath-day, but were unconcerned to acquaint themselves with him of whom those prophets did write. The circumstances under which he should be born, the manner in which he should grow up, the kind of ministry which he should fulfil, the tokens which he should multiply,

the character which he should exhibit, the death which he should die, all these had been depicted in the language of distinct announcement, while with that language they had been permitted to become familiar, and yet, when their own Messiah did actually appear, and when all these divers evidences did unitedly combine in him, they did not recognise him at all—nay, so possessed had their minds become with false notions concerning Him through the vain traditions with which they had made the word of God of none effect, that, in the place of recognising him as they ought to have done, they regarded him as a deceiver. Nor were even the apostles of the Saviour exempt from the common ignorance of their countrymen, so that on the day of his resurrection their master said unto them, “ O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the *prophets* have spoken ! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things ? ”

Is then the course which any of ourselves is pursuing in this matter a different course? Are we taking heed to the word of prophecy? While we remember that there is and must be much obscurity in the scenes which the spirit of prophecy opens up to the eye of our faith, do we remember at the same time that a blessing is pronounced upon those who read and those who hear the things which are written in the pages of the revelations of God, and who keep them in their hearts and show them forth in their lives? Then you may stand acquitted to yourselves from all charge of presumption in so doing, for in so doing you are here apostolically assured that you "*do well.*"

3. The Caution which is here added, "as unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts," a figure this which every one immediately discerns, immediately comprehends, for every one knows what, in the natural

world, is the dawn of day, and what the rising of the day-star by which the nearness of the sun's re-appearance above the horizon is betokened, and what, in the midst of the darkness which precedes, is the service of the lamp or lantern which the traveller carries on his way.

I may perhaps usefully offer, in the exposition of this figure, an illustration which this passage always revives in my own memory. I was some years since accompanying a friend to a religious meeting on a very dark night, when he said, "The lamp by the aid of which I am now driving may indeed help us to understand what the word of prophecy ought to be to ourselves. It is a light shining in a dark place. The moment I look away from the portion of the road which it illuminates, and endeavour to penetrate the surrounding obscurity, I am instantly bewildered, and should soon involve ourselves and

our vehicle in danger, but, as long as I avail myself of the measure of revelation which it yields, I proceed from one stage of our journey to another safely, and hope to reach the place whither we go, with God's blessing, in perfect security."

Such, according to the account before us, is the word of prophecy. "It is a light shining in a dark place." It is not the light of the day-dawn, nor the light of the risen day-star, but it is a light shining in a dark place unto those who are sufficiently meek in heart to use it for the purpose for which it has been given. And only let any one of the Lord's disciples thus use it—let him not attempt to penetrate into the obscurity on which it does not shed any ray of light whatsoever—let him be content to leave the dark future, of which there is no disclosure, the dark future still, and let him avail himself of the measure of information respecting "things to come,"

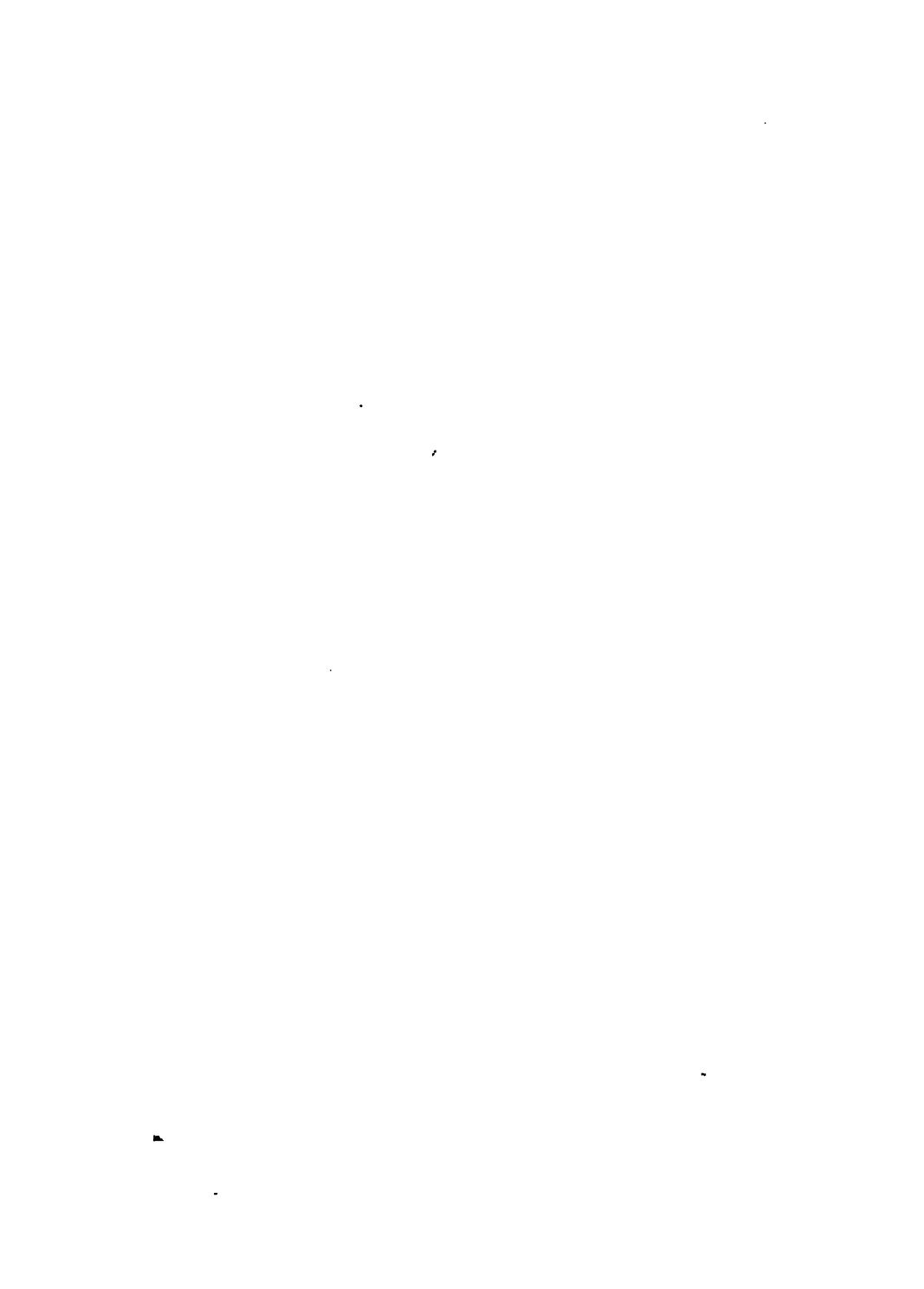
which is mercifully vouchsafed, and that man will find in the word of prophecy light to guide, and comfort, and cheer him along the path of Christian duty, and will continually advance by means of it in the experimental knowledge of Him who is "the Sun of Righteousness" and "the bright Morning Star," even Christ Jesus.

Hence we hesitate not to commend to the studious attention of every one, who would wish to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the word of prophecy, and that however unlearned he may be in the worldly meaning of the term. Such an one may not indeed be able to acquire so minute an insight into the scenes of the coming revelation as others who have more information and more help from other sources, but he will, under the teaching of him who is the Spirit of Prophecy, find an accession therefrom to his

hope in God and to his joy of faith. He will be enabled to discern the great comprehensive purpose of the Most High as the God of the covenant in its leading outlines, though not in its lesser details. He will be conducted into the midst of those outstanding events unto which the world and the church are reserved, and unto which, through the rapid evolution of facts at the present time, the world and the church are manifestly hastening. Thus the grand and prominent features of the redemption-scheme will become more and more familiar to his mind, and, by their presence there, will serve to diminish the importance of all earthly things in his esteem, and to raise his thoughts, desires, and efforts above the level of time and sense. He will become more and more godly. His hope, inflamed by the anticipation of the marvellous developments which are at hand, will more

largely abound. The difficulties in the divine administration of human affairs will not perplex him as they perplex others, while he connects them with the issue by which they are to be solved. The tribulations of his lot as a pilgrim of grace will be unto him welcome and precious, when he thinks of the eternal glory in which they are to be swallowed up. Every increase of acquaintanceship with God's prophetic truth will be unto him an increase of cheerful delight. Happy is the man for whom, when it is enquired of him, "Believest thou the Prophets?" every servant of God who knows him can confidently reply—

"I KNOW THAT THOU BELIEVEST"



CHAPTER II.

JOHN ii. 22.

When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them ; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

THE upright student of this World's History, having that history alone to guide him, must needs conclude that there is some great design, of the development of which the earth which he inhabits is the intended theatre. The conclusion, to which the volume of Human Record thus conducts, the volume of Divine Revelation expressly affirms, designating that design "the Eternal Purpose which God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Ephes. iii. 11.

This purpose the word of prophecy unfolds, of which word no inconsiderable portion has been already accomplished. The fact that it is so is a fact from which much advantage may be derived, and in which much responsibility is involved, enabling us on the one hand to understand of what kind will be those further accomplishments for which we are instructed still to look, and leaving us on the other the more guiltily inexcusable, if our persuasion of the certainty of those accomplishments is not immoveably assured.

With a view therefore to our own responsibility in this matter that we may redeem it, and to our own advantage in this matter that we may secure it, we may suitably take up the consideration of these two points,

1. The Fulfilments of Prophecy thoughtfully Remembered, “ when therefore he was

risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them ;” and

2. The Fulfilments of Prophecy beneficially Improved, “and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said ;” and may we all be divinely led to an edifying meditation of these truths, and thus not only engage more frequently, but also engage more profitably, in the study of that prophetic message, all of which was inspired by the Holy Ghost, and none of which is of any private interpretation.

1. The Fulfilments of Prophecy thoughtfully Remembered, “when therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them.” Said what unto them ? had said that he would do to “the temple of his body” that which he had just done to the temple of their city—that, as he had cleansed the latter of the polluted

things with which it was profaned, so, when they had destroyed the former, he would release it from its threatened corruption, and in three days raise it up. For the material temple, the zeal of which had as it were eaten him up, was, though the priests and people of Israel knew it not, a type of that true tabernacle, even the tabernacle of flesh which, through his Incarnation, he had assumed. Accordingly, when their Master had been put to death, and had risen again in the same body on the third day, this assurance which he had previously given was thereby recalled to their memory, and they discerned in his resurrection the exact verification of it. Such exact verifications abound. For, as respects ourselves, we are not standing at the commencement, or even near the commencement of the prophetic roll, but are rather standing near its close. Many, very many of the folds of which that roll consists

have been actually opened up. The things which had been written once, as things that were not, have long since become things that were. They are still inscribed indeed on the page of prediction, but they are also transcribed into the register of completion. Let us recal not a few of them to our recollection, and mark what has been the *manner* of their development.

As to *Persons*. The Lord said unto *Noah*, "The end of all flesh is come before me, make thee an ark of gopher-wood, and behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee." Gen. vi. 13—18. Noah prepared the ark which he had been commanded to prepare. The flood of waters descended upon the earth.

The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, was saved together with his house.

“ Now the Lord had said unto *Abram*, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee ; and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great ; and thou shalt be a blessing : and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee : and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” Gen. xii. 1—3. Accordingly, Abram went out, not knowing whither he went. He sojourned in Canaan as the strange country into which the Most High conducted him, and, although the Canaanite was still in the land, he sojourned there safely. The Lord blessed him, so that “ he had flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and men-servants,

and maid-servants, and camels, and asses, and he died in a good old age, an old man and full of years." There was made of him a great nation, so that there sprang of him, though as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea-shore innumerable. His name is great, called as he is the father of the faithful, and the friend of God. The benediction or the malediction of Jehovah has rested upon all who have shown good-will or evil will to Abraham's seed. The blessing of Abraham has come upon the Gentiles through faith, by reason of which as many of them as believe are made "fellow heirs and partakers of God's promise in Christ by the Gospel."

Joseph dreamed two dreams, in the one of which, as he and his brethren were binding sheaves together, his own sheaf stood upright, and all their sheaves made obeisance unto it, and in the other of which the sun and the

moon and the stars were seen making obeisance unto him.—Gen. xxxvii. 5—10. And

“it came to pass that the sons of Jacob came down into Egypt to buy corn, and Joseph was governor over the land, and Joseph’s brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces towards the earth.”

“That saith of *Cyrus*, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.”—

Isaiah xliv. 28 “Now in the first year of *Cyrus*, King of Persia, the Lord stirred up the Spirit of *Cyrus*, King of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith *Cyrus*, King of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his

people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.”—2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23. The Word of the Lord came unto *Ezekiel*, saying, “Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down.”—*Ezekiel* xxiv. 15, 16. And when the Lord in his anger profaned the sanctuary of the house of Israel, the excellency of their strength, the desire of their eyes and that which their soul pitied, then “*Ezekiel* was unto them a sign, for, according to all that he had done, they did.” How different were the promises thus given to different persons, and yet how minute the performance of his own peculiar promise to each of them!

As to *Kingdoms*. The kingdom of *Assyria* was a very ancient one, and, forasmuch as its oppressions of the chosen people were cruel, not only its overthrow was pre-signified by

Nahum, one of the Hebrew prophets, but the manner of its overthrow also. The particulars of his prediction are numerous, and all that we can do is to notice the more remarkable of them. The inhabitants were to be overpowered while they were in a condition of drunkenness.—Nahum i. 10. The defence of Nineveh their metropolis was to be one of extraordinary preparation, 2—5. An unusual inundation was to undermine and demolish its walls of strength, 2—6. The conquerors were to find much precious spoil in the midst of it, 2—9. Its desolations were to be utter, so that all who looked upon them should flee from the sight of them, and say, Nineveh is laid waste, 3—7. Thus wrote the prophet about a century before, and what writes the historian afterwards? He informs us that the Assyrian monarch having, in the elation of his successes, given himself and his army over to sloth and revelry, and certain

deserters having reported to the enemy the helplessness to which he and they were reduced, the enemy made a sudden attack upon the camp, and inflicted a most frightful slaughter. Thereupon the king himself and as many as survived escaped to the city, and, being there abundantly supplied with resources as well as impregvably fortified, sustained with scarcely any misadventure a close siege of two years. But at the end of two years there took place an unexpected inundation of the Tigris which swept away no less than twenty furlongs of the wall. The victorious adversary was greatly enriched by the immense treasures which fell into his hands, and the city, once so mighty and renowned, became an uttermost desolation—nothing but piles of rubbish—"not even its ruins remain."

Babylon was another of the celebrated kingdoms of antiquity. It enslaved and evil-

intreated the Jews even as Assyria had enslaved and evil-intreated the Israelites. Hence its destruction also and the manner of it were foretold. The more notable characteristics of its doom were to be that the Medes should be stirred up against them.—Isaiah xiii. 17. That the waters of its river should be dried up.—Jer. l. 38 and li. 36. That its rulers and hosts should be surprised in the hour of intoxication and feasting.—Jer. li. 39. That it should never be inhabited again, not even the Arabian pitch his tent there, but remain from generation to generation an abode of the most noisome and doleful creatures.—Isaiah xiii. 19—22. Such were the indications of prophecy, and what are the attestations of history? As Belshazzar and his lords were revelling together, the waters of the Euphrates were diverted by the direction of Cyrus from their channel, so as to leave the bed thereof altogether dry—that

the Medes in the same hour took the kingdom—that, when Alexander the Great in the height of his power was intending to rebuild the city, he died suddenly—that it became, from one stage of decline to another, void of inhabitants, not even furnishing pasture enough to tempt the wandering Arab to encamp there for a night, but repelling all travellers from an entrance amidst its ruins because of the serpents and scorpions which are accumulated therein. It is, as it is written that it should be, “a destruction from the Almighty,” “as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.”

Tyre and *Egypt* were likewise illustrious kingdoms of the past. To these, however, we cannot now particularly speak. We can only aver concerning them that the details of Prophetic Truth and the details of Historic Truth are found in strict correspondence with each other, and that whatsoever the one

directed the servants of God to expect the other specifically testifies. The same may be affirmed with equal verity as to the Arabian descendants of Ishmael, divers countries contiguous to Palestine, the seven churches of Asia, and the Church of the Apostacy, the several conditions of all which are but a transcript of the scenes which the Seers of the Omniscient One had portrayed long before, and cannot fail to amaze every one who compares the Divine and human testimonies together by the preciseness of their circumstantial agreement. Or, to pass from that which is highly important to that which is more highly important still, from persons of celebrity to the *chief* of persons, and from kingdoms of celebrity to the *chief* of kingdoms.

As to the chief of persons—the Man Christ Jesus. Did a virgin conceive and bring forth a son? Was his name called Emmanuel?

Was he born in Bethlehem? Was he by reason of his parents' flight thither called out of Egypt? Did Rachel weep for her children on his behalf? Did a voice in the wilderness announce his advent? Did he dwell for a season by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles? Did he open the ears of the deaf, and the eyes of the blind, and the lips of the dumb? Was he, notwithstanding all his mighty works, and all his unblemished reputation, and all his benevolent activities, despised and rejected of men? Did the multitudes which went before and which followed after cry out, as he rode on an ass through the streets of Jerusalem, Hosannah to the Son of David? Blessed is the kingdom of our father David! Did one of the companions of his privacy betray him into the hand of his murderers? Was his visage more marred than any man's by reason of his

unexampled sorrows? Was he led as a lamb, a silent and inoffensive lamb, to the slaughter? Was he nailed to the tree as a malefactor? Did they cast lots upon his vesture? Did they give him vinegar to drink? Was not a bone of him broken? Did he make his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death? Did he, in spite of the special watch and the sealed stone, reappear alive the third day? Did he ascend up where he was before? Did he send down in the power of a new effusion the grace of the Holy Ghost? Has he maintained ever since the evidences of his exaltation as the Head of the Church? Then all these, and many such like things as these, which are so minutely recorded as facts, were the very things which were long foreshewed as futurities, written concerning the Son of Man, but now accomplished.

As to the *chief* of kingdoms—the kingdom of Israel—the kingdom of which the Man

Christ Jesus, the Son of Man, is already the appointed, and is yet to be the revealed Head. For though in man's esteem the meanest, the kingdom of Israel is, in God's esteem, the greatest of all kingdoms—all others are only mentioned in the Scriptures of Truth, in so far as they are mentioned at all, because of their connexion with this, either as benefactors or adversaries. And why? Because the nation of Israel was that which from the midst of all the other nations of the earth the Lord God, as the God of grace, chose to be a peculiar inheritance unto himself. Hence its marvellous origin and its no less marvellous end. Were they strangers in a land which was not theirs? Were they afflicted in that land as bond slaves for the space of four hundred years? Was the nation, whom they thus served, signally judged? Did they afterwards come out with much substance? When the iniquity of the Amo-

rites was full, did they return into Canaan? Did they possess the lands of the heathen? Did they turn aside from the worship of their own God to the worship of idols? Were they, as the punishment of their iniquity, carried away from time to time into captivity? Did they at length kill the Prince of Life? Did they add to all their other provocations the further and final provocation of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? Did the Roman armies compass them about? Were their city and temple destroyed, their priesthood and sacrifices abolished? Have they been from that hour to this for a prey and for a proverb? Are they dispersed, and yet distinct, among all nations? Then all which we thus know concerning them was that which had been made known from above concerning them with all particularity of detail, and we have only to open the Scriptures of the prophets to find therein that so it should

be. The Lord, even the mighty God, had long before spoken it, and that which he had spoken he has made good.

2. The Fulfilments of Prophecy beneficially Improved, “and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said;” and here we have a division which but a few words may sufficiently dismiss. The disciples of Jesus, those who companied with him as he went in and out among the children of his people during the continuance of his earthly ministrations, were reminded by his resurrection of the occasion to which our passage has respect, and of the assurance which he had then expressed. The result was, as it could not fail to be, that they were confidently persuaded of the truth of that assurance. This, however, was not the only result. Their confident persuasion of the truth of the *whole* Scripture was deepened.

They perceived that the word which Jesus had said, when he engaged to raise up on the third day the temple of his body, was itself one of the antecedent intimations of the scripture—that their risen Master was himself the True Tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man—that that Tabernacle could not be dissolved so as to see corruption—and that, in taking again the life which he had laid down of himself, he had but given effect in due time to one of the many declarations which had gone before concerning him. Thus the Truth of God, as communicated in the volume of his book, had gathered to itself, not indeed a new certainty, but, in reference to their human weakness, a new confirmation, and they were the more prepared to expect, with the anticipation of a livelier faith, the evolution in its own time of every scene which the pen of inspiration had fore-traced.

The suggestions of our subject are two—

1. How assuring is the voice which the fulfilments of prophecy emit! It is indeed true that no word which the God of Truth has uttered can be rendered more sure by any additional certificate whatsoever, for “he is faithful that promised, and cannot deny himself.” But at the same time it is no less true that the much infirmity by which the servants of the God of Truth are beset creates a necessity that their faith should be upheld and renewed. Hence he, with whom it is impossible to lie, and whose every statement in its own naked simplicity stands inviolably sure, has, in gracious consideration of that infirmity, condescended to confirm his own promise by an oath, swearing by himself because he could swear by no greater, and we have the distinct affirmation of one who is the true and faithful witness that, if he did

tell unto his followers things which were to be, before they came to pass, then it was with this very design that, when they had come to pass, they might *believe*. And if so, how highly favoured in this respect are the disciples of the same Jesus now! How many and how marvellous are the accomplishments in the midst of which their mind may delightedly exercise itself, and from which their faith may derive unto itself new sustentation continually! How accumulative is the evidence of which it is their privilege to be the happy possessors! Yes! the successive developments of ages and generations are theirs, and well may each of them, as he considers the days of old, the years of ancient times, take up as his own the resolution of grace and say, "I will remember the works of the Lord, surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of thy work, and talk of

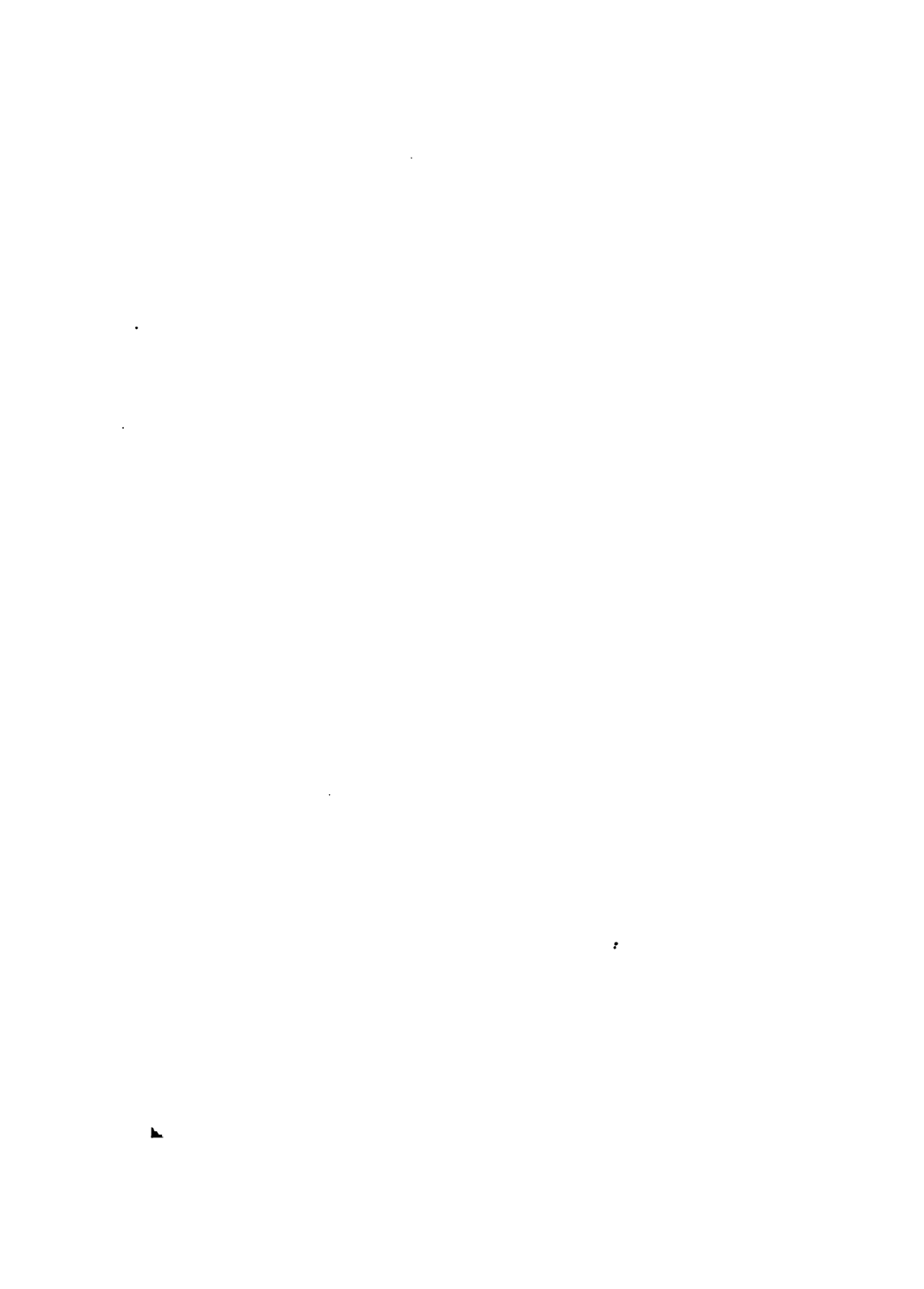
thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary, who is so great a God as our God?"

Lastly, How *literal* is the interpretation which the fulfilments of prophecy illustrate? It has been with the view of bringing out this fact the more prominently that we have endeavoured to compress within so narrow a compass so many divine predictions which Time, in the revelations of its course, has unfolded. They are indeed but a sample, but then they are a sample at once satisfactory and sufficient. They are enough to demonstrate the *mode* in which the purpose of the Most High takes effect. We have seen them made good in their very letter—details even the most minute, made good in their very letter. And if then so large a portion of the things which once were not, but which now are, have been literally accomplished, can it be reasonably supposed that the comparatively

few which remain shall not be literally accomplished also? This were to represent the one purpose of the One Jehovah as at discord with itself. This were to close our eyes against the light which has been vouchsafed for our information and guidance. Let us rather welcome and prize the light which has thus been vouchsafed unto us. The one purpose of the One Jehovah is at unity, at perfect unity with itself. The events which go before are introductory to the events which follow after. Whatsoever is delineated in the design will be found in the execution. "Not one jot or one tittle shall in anywise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." "The counsel of the Lord that shall stand, and the thoughts of his heart from generation to generation." He not only puts into the mouth of his servants the word which they are to speak, but also confirms the word of his servants. He not only inspires, but

performs also, the counsel of his messengers. Men may lie, and the sons of men may repent, but God is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent, and when any deny his word as though it had no real inspiration, or explain it away as though it had no distinct signification, his reply is that of Independent Majesty—

“WHAT I HAVE WRITTEN, I HAVE WRITTEN.”



CHAPTER III.

DAN. ii. 36.

This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.

THE subject of our last meditation was fulfilled prophecy. We then demonstrated that, in the case of certain persons, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Cyrus, Ezekiel—in the case of certain kingdoms, Assyria and Babylon—in the case of the chief of all persons and the chief of all kingdoms, Jesus on the one hand and Israel on the other—all happened unto them as had been divinely foreshewed, and that, although the messengers of the Most High did not confine themselves to any general outline, but for the most part committed themselves to the minutest particulars, yet

in the minutest particulars the accuracy of their message has been approved.

We then also added the affirmation that this accuracy of predictive detail was not peculiar to the persons and kingdoms thus specified, but common to all the subjects of the same testimony, and that, in comparing that which went before on the page of Prophecy, with that which was recorded afterwards on the page of History, as respects other individuals also, as Sarah, Moses, Rahab, Joshua, Gideon, David, and many with them—as respects other nations also, Egypt and Tyre, the descendants of Ishmael and Esau, the inhabitants of districts on the borders of Palestine—as respects the Asiatic churches and the anti-Christian apostacy—they are all found under the same prophetical conditions and with the same historical results.

Thus there was brought out the very important fact that the word of prophecy, in so

far as it has been already fulfilled, has been fulfilled in the *letter* of it, and, as a natural deduction from the fact, we expressed our persuasion that those who are looking for the further accomplishments of the Divine purpose in their *literal*, and not their spiritual import, both have precedent in their favour, and keep that purpose in harmony with itself.

Now, when we remember how large a space "things to come" occupy in the volume of God's revealed will, and how many of those things, having ceased to be future, as they once were, are now numbered with the things which have been, we can scarcely refrain from the inquiry as to what the point is in the process of prophetic evolution at which our own generation is placed, and it is in the hope of furnishing a useful reply to this inquiry that we set ourselves to consider from the verse we have chosen,

1. The Dream Recalled, "This is the dream,"
and

2. The Dream Interpreted, "and we will
tell the interpretation thereof before the
king;"

And may there be given unto all of us
from on high that spirit of impartiality
which so well becomes us when professing to
hear what the Lord God will say unto us,
and that which shall be spoken contribute to
the sobriety of mind which the solemn aspect
of our own times requires.

1. The Dream Recalled, "this is the dream."
For, as Daniel himself informs us, "in the
second year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchad-
nezzar dreamed dreams wherewith his spirit
was troubled, and his sleep brake from him."
As he lay upon his bed, he fell into a train
of anxious thought which kept him wakeful.
Accordingly, under the constraint of his earn-
est desire to be set free from his new dis-

quietude of spirit, he commanded all those whose arts were professedly the arts of sorcery, and astrology, and magic, to shew him what the dream was, and what its meaning. This of course they were utterly incompetent to do. Still, unusual and unreasonable as the demand was, he scrupled not to make it, and, when it was not satisfied, he issued a decree immediately, with all the furious pride of eastern despotism, that all the wise men of Babylon should be destroyed. Nor the wise men of Babylon only, but, forasmuch as “in all matters of wisdom and understanding the king had already found Daniel and his young companions ten times better than all the magicians in his realm,” they also were included in the decree. Thereupon Daniel went in to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and invited them to join with him in prayer to the God of their fathers that, not for their own safety only, but for his own glory also,

he would graciously disclose the information demanded. This their united prayer of faith was answered. The thing was made known to Daniel in a night-vision, and he, disclaiming all insight into the secrets either of God or man, and ascribing the disclosure which he was about to make to the God of heaven alone, from whom he had received it, said unto the king,

“Thou, O king, sawest, and, behold, a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee, and the form thereof was terrible. This image’s head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and

the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer-threshing floors, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them, and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. This is the dream."

The image then which the Babylonian Monarch thus beheld was confessedly one of no ordinary kind. It was not an image of gold. It was not an image of silver. It was not an image of brass. It was not an image of iron. It was not an image of clay. But it was an image compounded of all these. The head thereof was gold altogether—its breasts and arms silver altogether—its belly and thighs brass altogether—its legs iron altogether—its feet an intermixture of clay and iron. It was a great image in human form, colossal in its stature, and commanding in its proportions. It was a brilliant image, as any

image must needs have been, the main and prominent ingredients of whose composition were lustrous metals, such as brass, and silver, and fine gold. It was a terrible image, inspiring at once the bosom of the spectator with an emotion of awe, nor could it fail to deepen intensely that emotion, when a stone, which had been invisibly cut out from the mountain at the base of which the image stood, was seen to fall upon its feet, and the powder to which the whole mass was thereby reduced was carried away by the wind, even as the chaff is driven away. Who can wonder that such a vision of the night as this, preceded as it had been by the musings of a sleepless pillow, should as it were haunt the monarch, to the eye of whose mind it had been presented, or that he should avail himself of any probable means within his reach through which his natural curiosity might be satisfied, and his new uneasiness allayed?

2. The Dream Interpreted, “and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king:” “Thou, O king, art a king of kings, for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heaven, hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron, forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things, and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes part of potter’s clay and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided, but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou

sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men, but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter, and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

This Image then, as it is expounded by Daniel himself, or rather by the God of Daniel, was a *Prophetic Image*—prophetic in its several parts and as a whole—prophetic in its several parts, the head, the breast, the thighs, the legs representative of four universal empires, and the feet of the divided state of the fourth empire for an appointed period, and prophetic as a whole, the entire image from head to foot being designative both of a measured interval of time extending from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to the fall of the stone, and of an unmeasured desolation with which the territory within the limits of the image is to be eventually visited.

The *Head* of gold was, as the prophet distinctly told him, Nebuchadnezzar himself or the kingdom of Babylon of which he was the monarch. The chief of the precious metals is gold, and, in its emblematical application, must be understood to indicate the pre-emi-

nent magnificence of the kingdom which it denotes. Upon any lengthened demonstration of this fact, the pre-eminent magnificence of the Chaldean monarchy, we cannot, consistently with either the design or space of our present exposition, attempt to enter. We would refer you in this matter to the 13th and 14th chapters of Isaiah, in which Babylon is denominated “the glory of kingdoms,” and its metropolis “the golden city;” and from many other expressions of which its illustrious excellency may be inferred. Compare with those chapters the 27th chapter of Jeremiah. As respects ourselves, however, it will suffice to remind you that the Babylonian was but the continuation of the Assyrian empire under a new dynasty—that the walls of Babylon were, in respect of thickness, and height, and compass, and gateways, and towers, unexampled, while each of its fifty streets was fifteen miles in length and

one hundred and fifty feet in width—that the number of its squares was six hundred and seventy-six, enclosing each of them a space of two miles and a quarter—that the houses which surrounded them were splendid, both in elevation and ornament, and the gardens connected with them most varied and beautiful—that the Temple of Belus higher than the pyramids of Egypt, with its venerable sanctuary and astronomical observatory, lifted up its imposing structure in the midst of it, while among its other costly decorations there stood within the temple many statues of solid gold, one of which was no less than forty feet in height raised upon a lofty pedestal of solid gold also—that the hanging gardens of Nebuchadnezzar's own palace were themselves a marvellous exhibition of lavish expenditure, one spacious terrace surmounting another by a long succession of graduated ascents, those terraces resting upon

arches, which in their turn rested upon stronger arches still, and the floors with which they were overlaid capable of sustaining supplies of mould in which the largest trees could grow and flourish. Who that understands what human nature is can wonder that the king who had, through the slaves and spoils which he had captured, been mainly instrumental in consummating so great magnificence, should exclaim, as he was walking in the palace of his kingdom, and was surveying all the accumulated wealth which lay around and beneath him, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"

Little did he think that, within but a few years of his own decease, the head of gold, by which he himself was represented in the vision which he had seen, would be supplanted by "the *breast* and *arms* of silver"

delineated in the same vision, and yet so it was. His own successors on the throne were but few and contemptible. Hence soon "another kingdom arose." In one night was Belshazzar, the King of the Chaldeans, the last King of the Chaldeans, slain, and Darius the Median took the kingdom. Thus commenced the empire which, in its earliest stage of development, is known in history as the Medo-Persian, and, in its after developments, as the Persian Empire. Like that which it supplanted, it was great and eminent. No sooner had Darius added the dominions of Belshazzar to his own, than "it pleased him to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom, and over these, three presidents," and "in the days of Ahasuerus (this is Ahasuerus which reigned from India even unto Ethiopia over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces) in the third

year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants, the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces being before him when he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore days.”—Esther i. 1—4. The Persian empire then, as that by which the Babylonian was succeeded, was both great and eminent. Still it was *inferior*, even as the silver, though precious, is inferior to the gold, and while the career of Cyrus himself was confessedly renowned and his conquests conspicuous, all which he achieved was shortly neutralized by the senseless indiscretions of his son. The insane expedition of Xerxes also into Greece is familiar to every scholar, whereby he exposed to the view of his adversaries the luxurious effeminacy of his troops and the enviable wealth of his treasury, so that

Alexander, afterwards surnamed the Great, having first consolidated the several states of Greece into one body, overran rapidly the provinces of Persia, and reduced them in the short interval of six years into complete subjection to himself.

Thus the second Empire of the Image, symbolised by the breast and arms of silver, was overthrown, and the third, symbolised by “the *belly* and *thighs* of brass” arose in its stead. But it was, as the Man of God, in his capacity of interpreter, declared that it should be “another third kingdom of brass,” inferior to the silver, even as the silver had been inferior to the gold. As far as pertained indeed to Alexander himself, his military triumphs were renowned, and the dominion which he established was great, but he died in consequence of a drunken debauch in the prime of his life, having first wept that there was not another world for him to invade and

conquer, and being cut off from the prosecution of any ultimate designs which he might have entertained. His kingdom, through the early failure of more direct claimants, was distributed among four of his distinguished generals, and continued, though thus territorially distributed, under the government of Macedonians until the subjugation of Syria and the East by the victorious armies of Rome.

Then was evolved the fourth Empire, whose distinguishing characteristic was *Iron*. No one who has ever studied the rise and progress of ancient Rome will feel disposed for a moment to question the aptitude of the symbol thus applied to it. As iron breaks in pieces and bruises, so did it break in pieces and bruise. It brooked not for an instant the least opposition to its will. It allowed no other state any pretensions to dignity or power, except in so far as it derived them

from having been made a provincial appendage to itself. All were obliged either to submit or to be crushed. No words in confirmation of this fact can be more expressive than those of Gibbon, who, though no believer in the Scriptures of the Prophets himself, yet, as a recorder of facts, unconsciously adopts the very language of this prophet. His words are these, "The arms of the Republic advanced with rapid steps to the Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, and the Ocean, and the images of gold, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively *broken* by the *iron* monarchy of Rome." Man, in the contemplation of the Past, selecting for the sake of its appropriateness the very term which God had previously selected in the contemplation of the future.

This kingdom, however, this iron kingdom, unlike those of brass, and silver, and gold,

which introduced it, was to abide, but in a "divided," and therefore enfeebled form. There was to continue in it "the strength of the iron," and yet, while it was to be "partly strong," it was, in agreement with the intermixture of the clay with the iron which Nebuchadnezzar saw, to be "partly broken also." That thus it literally was is a truth of which every one has a perfect knowledge who is at all intelligently acquainted with the records of the Roman Empire in the several stages of its decline. Such an one knows that it was from various contributory causes broken up into several lesser sovereignties, and that, as the toes of the image were ten in number, so were the kingdoms into which it was parted ten also. These kingdoms are enumerated by not a few distinguished writers who have devoted much attention to the subject, such as Machiavel, Mede, Bishop Lloyd, Dr. Hales, Sir Isaac Newton, Bishop

Newton. The occasions of the partial weakness of an Empire, which had been long accustomed to break in pieces whatsoever it pleased, and to stamp the residue with its feet, were divers, and of these occasions the incorporation of aliens through their admission to citizenship, and the reception of uncongenial foreigners into the army as recruits, are reputed to have been the chief, nor is it improbably this which is here indicated by the prediction that "they should mingle themselves with the seed of men." So has the territory represented by the Image been submitted to the changes which the Spirit of Prophecy pre-signified, and is in a condition of preparedness for the establishment of that "kingdom which shall never be destroyed," and for the descent of that Stone by which all these kingdoms shall be consumed.

Our application is twofold.

1. How exact are the terms which the pro-

phets of God employ ! This was one of the lessons which we deduced from our last meditation, and our present meditation furnishes a further proof of its truth. All the intimations of the Image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in the night-vision before us have taken effect in their *letter*. Their meaning has been demonstrated to be not figurative but real. The Babylonian empire passed away. The Persian succeeded in its place, and was inferior to it. The Macedonian overthrew the Persian, and then was overthrown by the Roman in its turn. The Roman was for a long period “ dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly,” and was “ diverse ” from all that went before it, and devoured or crushed every state which opposed it, “ as a beast having great iron teeth.” At length clay was intermingled with the iron thereof, and that, which had for ages been mighty altogether, became partially feeble. The kingdom was divided into

ten unequal parts, even as the feet of a man are divided into ten unequal members. It remains divided unto this hour. No fifth universal empire has ever arisen on the earth. All attempts to set one up have utterly and signally failed. What shall we say to all this? Shall we say that such a vision as this has almost reached its full accomplishment after the manner of a literal completion, and that the fulness itself of its accomplishment shall not be literal also? It cannot be. The Image will be broken in pieces at the appointed time, even the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold together, "and the true and indestructible kingdom of the Stone, which the God of heaven has promised to bring in shall 'fill the whole earth and stand for ever.'"

Lastly, How small a portion of the period which the Image embraces not improbably remains! It is now nearly two thousand

five hundred years since the dream which has been engaging our thoughts was dreamed. Since then not only have the first three kingdoms passed away, but before the fourth kingdom assumed the divided aspect under which it has since remained, the Saviour of mankind accomplished his Father's will, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate the Roman governor of Judea. His Gospel also was preached through the ministry of his apostles unto all the nations of the Roman Empire for a testimony, and the city and temple of Jerusalem were destroyed by the Roman armies, while those of the once-favoured people who escaped the edge of the sword were carried away captive into all lands without any opportunity of returning to their own. It is moreover almost fourteen hundred years since the last of the Roman Emperors resigned his crown and heritage into the hands of a barbarian invader. There have since transpired

the Manifestation of the False Prophet—the Revelation of the Mysterious Apostacy—the Saracenic and Turkish Devastations—the Disastrous Revolution in France—the astonishing revival of the French Emperorship—while the ancient people of the Most High are still in the countries of their dispersion, but attracting towards themselves the more favourable regard of the Gentile Churches. Is the Mohammedan Imposture, is the Papal Imposture, putting forth each of them its own appropriate evidence of approaching extinction? The persuasion is very widely diffused. These then are so many tokens given to our generation, but as, when the Lord laid in the midst of Zion a corner stone, the sons and daughters of Zion would not take heed to the warning which he gave them, that “whosoever should fall on that stone should be broken,” and thus, falling over it, were broken, so, now that the same Lord, in the orderings of his provi-

dence, is pointing as it were to the same stone as about to fall upon its kingdoms, and break them to pieces, the Nations of the faithless, and therofore heedless, Christendom are refusing to hear the admonitory voice addressed unto themselves,

“BUT ON WHOMSOEVER IT SHALL FALL, IT WILL
GRIND HIM TO POWDER.”

CHAPTER IV.

HEB. ii. 5—9.

For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing *that* is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

MUCH, very much, which the prophets of God foretold has already become the material of History—how much it is the privilege of the students of prophecy to discern. They however do discern it, and that most clearly. The more they exercise themselves in the scriptures of the prophets, the more they per-

ceive that He, whose scriptures they are, sees indeed "the end from the beginning," and that whatsoever the inspiration of his own pen has previously indited, the administration of his own Providence will eventually develop.

And if so—if the roll of prophetic communication is in so great a measure an unsealed roll—if so many of its folds lie revealed before our very eyes with all that lucid interpretation which the events themselves have supplied—if we can place side by side with each other so much which was predictively portrayed and so much which has actually transpired, and, as we compare them together, can find them standing in the same relation to each other as the plan of the designer and the execution of the design, then, knowing as we do the manifold accomplishments which have already taken effect, knowing the time at which our own generation has arrived,

knowing what the next events are to be by which the Purpose of the Great Jehovah is to be advanced forward as by another stage towards the maturity of its manifestation, and connecting all that we thus know with the peculiar aspect both of the world and of the church in these our own days, we cannot but feel persuaded that a crisis highly eventful both to the world and to the church is drawing on. Such a persuasion is not only not presumptuous under the circumstances in which we are found, but is rather the necessary product of those circumstances, and one which it were unreasonable on our part not to entertain and encourage.

Hence, while it could never have been in any age an unimportant inquiry as to what that change is to be which, when it does take place, is to be nothing less than the Regeneration of all things here below, it is an inquiry peculiarly important now, in reference

to which we distribute our verses into a two-fold division.

1. The World to come claimed as one of the Themes of the Apostolical Ministry—and

2. The World to come described as one of the Issues of the Evangelical Economy ;
and may we all seek after the truth according to the Divine Counsel, and, because we do so, find the truth to which our present passage has respect, according to the Divine Promise.

1. The World to come claimed as one of the Themes of the Apostolical Ministry, “ For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.” The Hebrew Apostle had been pointing out to his Hebrew Countrymen, as those to whom his epistle was addressed, the superiority of Jesus of Nazareth to all the prophets of their nation, illustrious as those prophets had confessedly been, inasmuch as he was what none of their

number either was, or professed to be, the Son of God. He had yet further affirmed the superiority of the same Jesus of Nazareth to all the angels of God, by whatever title they might be designated, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers. For the name which he had obtained by inheritance was not only a more excellent name than that of prophets, but even a more excellent name than that of angels also. The Lord had never said of any angel, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," nor, "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." He had, contrariwise to any such supposition, brought into the world one whom he denominated his "first-begotten," and had commanded all the angels of God to worship "him." The most which he had declared concerning his angels and his ministers was, that they were "spirits and a flame of fire," but concerning the Son he had de-

clared that he was “ God ”—that the throne which pertained to him was an eternal throne—that the sceptre of his kingdom was a sceptre of righteousness—that the oil with which he had been anointed among and above his fellows was the oil of a gladness far preferable to theirs—that he should survive the heavens and the foundations of the earth which he had himself, as the word of God, created, and, while they waxed old as a garment, and were folded up as a vesture, should continue the same, and his years not fail. Nay—was there ever any angel whom he had directed, as he had directed the Man Christ Jesus, to sit on his right hand until he made his enemies his footstool ? Were they not rather all of them represented by him as “ ministering spirits,” whom he sent forth as seemed good unto himself “ to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation ?”

The Apostle had also reminded all to whom

he wrote, that this greater dignity of the Messenger involved those to whom he was sent in a far deeper responsibility—that such things uttered forth by such lips demanded not only earnest heed, but “the more earnest heed;” and that if, the Law having been given by the disposition of angels, He, whose attendants those angels had then been, would not allow the word which they had spoken to be neglected with impunity, but every transgression and disobedience met with its own just recompence of reward, then surely, now that the announcements of the Gospel had been conveyed by the mouth of his own Incarnate Son—not by angels even of the highest degree, but by the Lord of angels himself—the witnesses of his choice and the Holy Ghost having added thereunto their further testimonies, and the salvation which had been proclaimed being so incalculably great, both in respect of the misery from which it

rescues and the majesty to which it promotes, any who were guilty of neglecting it could not hope to find for themselves any possibility of escape.

Here, however, are found two expressions—escape and salvation—in which some great future development is implied. Escape from what in the one case? and Salvation from what in the other? In order to the applicability of these expressions, there must needs be an appointed period at which will take place the outputting of an almighty power in its twofold exercise, a wrathful power for the devouring of the adversaries, and a saving power for the glorifying of the obedient. And that which the Man of God proceeds to assure us is that such is the very arrangement which has been made—that such a period has been appointed—that such a power, in its twofold exercise of indignation on the evil-doers and of approval of them which did well, will be

put forth—for that there is a “world to come” for the administration of which the Most High has, in the terms of the everlasting covenant, provided—a world to come, the subjection of which has not been committed unto angels—even the world to come “whereof we speak.”

It is this fact on which, in this division of our subject, we would desire to lay stress, that the apostles of the Lord and Saviour were accustomed to preach unto those who heard them “the world to come.” It was one of the great results in which the better dispensation, which the Son of Man had introduced, would issue, and which therefore, as his authorized messengers, they were careful to keep continually before the mind of the disciples. When they declared to those disciples concerning that Son of Man, that the object which he had in view in giving himself for their sins, was, “their deliverance from

this present evil world," it was in effect to justify their expectation of a world future and holier. When Peter affirmed that all these things upon which the eye of man now rests shall be dissolved, he did not leave his brethren in the comfortless desolation of such a statement, but still further affirmed that he himself, and all who were partakers with him of a like faith, were looking as the issue of that dissolution for "a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." Or, to confine ourselves to the one epistle of which our verses form a part, the writer of it had mentioned the *inheritance* of the Illustrious Person unto whom his whole epistle had respect, and the *powers* of the *world to come*, which his enlightened followers had been already permitted to foretaste.

2. The World to come described as one of the Issues of the Evangelical Economy.
 "But one in a certain place testified, saying,

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

This then is from the apostle's own pen a description of that "world to come," of which he and his fellow-apostles were wont to speak. He selects from the midst of Old Testament Scripture the eighth Psalm, and, through the exposition of a part of it, assists us in the exposition of the whole. "One in a certain

place testified." The individual thus testifying was David. He had been contemplating the heavens above which declare so demonstratively the glory of God and the firmament which sheweth so conspicuously his handiwork, and, when he considered with himself the sun and moon and stars which the Architect of the universe had ordained, he was filled with an uttermost amazement that a Creator so incomprehensible should take up towards a creature so insignificant as Man the relationship of a Redeemer—"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour." Of whom spake the prophet this? The question is here answered apostolically for us. He spake of *Jesus*. These things said David, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

Thus we are instructed concerning this particular Psalm that it was not commemorative, but predictive. It was not intended to recall retrospectively what the first Adam had been in the day and under the conditions of his creature-perfectness, but to foreshow antecedently what the second Adam would be in the day and under the conditions of his mediatorial perfectness. The Future is antedated as though it were the Past, for the language employed is the language of Him who "callesth those things which be not as though they were." The Subject of the Psalm was to be made inferior to the angels first, and to be crowned afterwards with glory and honour. So, in the exact verification of it, Jesus was made inferior to the angels in order that he might acquire the capability of undergoing that death, the sentence of which had passed upon all men, and of being made perfect through sufferings, and then, having

suffered as it behoved him, he entered into his glory.

Nor, in applying this Scripture unto Jesus, was the enlightened Paul acting without an ample warrant. For this very Jesus had applied it expressly to himself. It had opened with the words, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger." Such was the intimation of the Prophet. And what is the record of the Evangelist? "And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? and Jesus saith unto them, "Yea—have ye never read, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?"—Matt xxi. 15, 16. So did He, to whom all

prophets bare witness, and whose testimony is the very spirit of prophecy itself, appropriate publicly to himself the introductory indication of this Psalm, and affirm in the ears of the rulers and multitudes of Israel that that day was that scripture fulfilled in their ears.

The world to come, then, of which Apostles speak, though it is not in the Divine purpose put in subjection unto angels, is put in subjection unto the Man Christ Jesus. The promise, indeed, while it is unchangeable in the sureness of it, is not as yet performed in the fulness of it. "We see not yet all things put under him." There is, however, that measure of the performance which is visible unto us. We know that Christ Jesus, though in the form of God, and on that account thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, appeared in the form of a servant, and was thereby made for a

little season a little lower than the angels, "found in fashion as a man." We know that, in that likeness of sinful flesh which he had condescended to assume, he became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. We know that, being raised up again from the dead by the glory of the Father, he ascended up on high, and is there at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, "angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." We know all this concerning him through the testimony of the word of faith; and in the knowledge of all this we have a clear and assuring earnest that in due time nothing whatsoever will be left which will not be put under him. The fulfilment of this promise to the Second Adam, which we already possess in part, is to us a guarantee of its complete fulfilment.

But then, when we inspect the Psalm

itself in its entirety, and mark with observant attention *where* the manifested dominion of the illustrious Subject of it is to be, what do we find? We find that the scene of that manifested dominion is laid by the prophet not in the heavenly, but in the *earthly* places, and that the things which are to be visibly submitted to his sway, are not things above, but things below. The subjection of these is still future—yes, of these, for as the prophet continues in his delineation of the nature of the kingdom which he had been inspired to foreshow, “Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.” Surely, creatures such as these, sheep and oxen—the field and the beasts of the field—the air

and the fowls of the air—the sea and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through its paths, all of these pertain not to the skies, but to the earth which is beneath the skies, and direct the eye of our faith to that earth for the promised manifestation of “the world to come.”

Our conclusion is intended to be,

1. Confirmatory of a Former Statement.

That statement was that, those who are looking for the literal accomplishment of the predictions which remain, both have precedent in their favour, and keep the Word of Prophecy in harmony with itself. The Psalm of our present thoughts, as it is apostolically interpreted to us, contributes another illustration of its truth. The second Adam, the Man Christ Jesus, was, through his manifestation in the flesh, and the manner of his tabernacling with the sons of men, “made a little lower than the angels.” The more any

individual surveys the ordinances of the heaven above, and considers the demonstration which the sun, and moon, and stars, afford of the greatness of Him who created them, and then compares therewith the shame to which the Son of the Blessed scrupled not to stoop, in order that he might work out for such worthless beings as ourselves the redemption which his Father had devised, the more must he stand amazed at the superabounding grace with which the supreme Lord of all has visited the Family of Man. Strength was ordained, and that “out of the very mouth of the babes and sucklings.” The Mediator is now “crowned with glory and honour,” and, though for a season inferior to the angels, and thankful to receive their ministrations of comfort, he is exalted far above them all, and is receiving the homage of their adoration and service. All this is but the earnest of the

further verifications of the promise which has been given him. The dominion over all things here below will be seen to be his at the time appointed of the Father. All the works of the Lord will be placed under his feet in demonstration of his universal supremacy.

The beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, as well as the human populations of the earth, will acknowledge the fulness of his visible sovereignty. His glory now fills the whole heaven of heavens. Yet a little while, and the whole *earth* shall be filled with his glory also.

Lastly. Corrective of a Common Error, even the error of supposing that in the Heavenly Places will be displayed the Kingdom of the Christ. It is not so written in the volume of the Book. The heavens and the earth, which now are, are indeed reserved

unto fire, and shall therefore be dissolved ; but then what follows ? Is it that we, who are hasting unto that coming of the day of God, expect to be translated into the heaven of heavens from whence the descending Jesus came ? In no wise—but we look, in the stead of those which shall have passed away, for “ a new heaven and a new earth.” The glory which is to be revealed in the saints is the glory of their manifestation as the Sons of God. And what saith the Scripture ? “ The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in *hope*, because the creature itself also, the whole creation which groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, shall be *delivered* from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty

of the children of God.”—Rom. viii. 19—21. All its present vanity then terminated, all its present hope then satisfied. What again saith the Scripture? “I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men,”—not the tabernacle of men is with God,—“and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make *all things new*.”—Rev. xxi. 3—5.

What saith the Scripture yet again? “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of *this* world are become the kingdoms

of our Lord and of his Christ ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”—Rev. xi. 15. Or, in order that we may not inconveniently accumulate our appeals to the testimony, yet once more what saith the Scripture ? “He who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth ; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth ; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes. For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth : and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create : for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people : and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. The wolf and the lamb shall feed

together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock : and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."—Isa. lxy. 16—25.

CHAPTER V.

LUKE xxi. 24.

Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

THE Vision of the Image which Nebuchadnezzar saw passed under our review. We then compared its prophetical intimations with the registrations of history, and found that there was a close correspondence between them—a correspondence so close as to constrain the inference that they were divinely intended to stand in mutual connexion with each other.

The demonstration of this however, while it was indeed one of the objects, was not the main object which we then had in view. The object which we then had mainly in view was

to show that the Period of Time which the Image embraced must needs be now on the eve of expiration—that the four universal empires which it denoted did succeed each other and pass away, while no fifth universal empire has ever since arisen upon the earth—and not only so—but that also, under the divided form of the fourth and last of those empires, almost all the events for which the Word of Prophecy instructed us to look previously to their destruction have either been accomplished entirely, or are in process of accomplishment, so that, as soon as the conditions into which the territory of the Image has been brought have attained their natural crisis, the Stone may be expected to fall upon its kingdoms, and grind them to powder.

And now, the Words of the Great Prophet himself, on which we are about to dwell, will furnish unto us a continuation of the same train of thought, if we notice in them,

1. The Day of Jerusalem's Desolation Announced, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles," and

2. The Term of Jerusalem's Desolation Defined, "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled;" and may we be honestly desirous of discovering what the things are which the God of the covenant has seen good to reveal to us, that so we may understand the developments of the Past, and may discern, through the aid of those developments, what the Immediate Future is to be.

1. The Day of Jerusalem's Desolation Announced, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles." The time of her visitation, during which the things belonging to her peace were pressed upon her acceptance, had been vouchsafed unto her, but she had not known it so as to welcome and improve it. Not only had the Word, for the revelation of the divine mystery,

been made flesh and dwelt among them, but, for the fulfilment of the national promise also, he had taken upon him "the seed of Abraham," and had "come unto his own," but his own even had not received him. What if he had multiplied in the midst of them such wonders as none other man had ever multiplied? What if he had spoken among them as man never spake before? What if with a generous sympathy, which neither ingratitude nor any other grievous provocation could extinguish or abate, he had borne their griefs and carried their sorrows? What if, while his footsteps were slandered wherever he went, his reputation had been unsullied purity itself, without so much as even one blemish, one spot? What if the earnestness, with which he had sought to win them over to the perception and pursuit of their own true interests, had been deeper and more patient than that with

which any earthly parent, in his or her anxious fondness, ever pleaded with a wayward child? What of all this? Notwithstanding all this, the nation had despised him; and, in the bitter anguish with which a contempt so universal oppressed him, he had at length wept over the city as it lay before him in its guilt and doom, and had cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"

Not, however, that that which the sons and daughters of Jerusalem had thus done unto himself filled up the measure of their iniquity. So far from this, whatsoever they had spoken, or might yet speak, against him, as the Son of man, might be forgiven

them. Could he but have indulged the hope that, after they had nailed him with so much cruel gladness to the tree of shame, they would discover in the fact of his resurrection the evidence of their unexampled guilt, and look up with the eye of a sincere repentance, and of a genuine faith, to Him whom they had pierced, then he would have been comforted on their behalf, for in that case the forgiveness which his blood, as the blood of mediatorial propitiation, would procure, and which was about to be preached unto them in his name, would, with all its inclusive benefits, be theirs. But he knew, as he had already forewarned them, that in refusing to hear Moses and the Prophets, and, because they did so, in refusing yet further to hearken unto himself, they would not be persuaded though he rose from the dead. He knew that as they had persecuted himself, so would they, from a like detesta-

tion of the holiness of truth, persecute the messengers whom he should send. He knew that, the ministration of the Spirit having succeeded to his own ministration as their Messiah, they would likewise blaspheme the Holy Ghost. Hence he knew that they would, as a Nation, add sin unto sin, until they had exhausted for a season all the resources of the divine forbearance, and the wrath would come upon them to the uttermost. Accordingly, the hour in the which he should be offered up being now nigh at hand, and some of his disciples having called his attention to the temple as a structure adorned with so many goodly stones and gifts, he embraced the opportunity of disclosing unto them the sad and disastrous ruin which awaited it. He assured them that yet a little while, and not so much as one stone should be left of that vast and magnificent structure that should

not be thrown down. He admonished them that the city, which seemed to them to be reposing securely as it were on a rock of insurmountable strength, would be compassed with armies, and laid even with the ground; that great, beyond all other tribulations with which any land or any people had been visited, should be the distress and the wrath with which their own land, and the children of their own people, would be overwhelmed; that multitudes of them should fall by the edge of the sword, while they that escaped the edge of the sword should be carried away captive into all nations; or, to sum up all in one comprehensive denunciation of woe, "Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles."

How soon these days of vengeance commenced, and all the things which had been written concerning them fulfilled, is well known to every one to whom only the more

signal and prominent facts of this World's History are known. Within the brief interval of less than forty years the armies of Rome, still in the resistless strength of her iron rule, came up against Jerusalem, and besieged it. The attendant horrors, and the abiding desolations of that eventful siege, who is there that has never read? They have been inscribed by the hand of the uninspired historian among the chronicles of Human Record. The enemy whom the Lord God of their fathers had, in that day of his fierce anger, summoned forth against them, did literally, by the line of circumvallation which they drew around it, "cast a trench about their city, and keep them in on every side." The assault which was preparing from without was aggravated intensely by the discords which prevailed within. The very confidence which, in spite of the straitness of the siege and the desperation of

their circumstances, the inhabitants presumptuously indulged of some divine interposition on their behalf, had the fatal effect of seducing them into acts of defiance and treachery, suited to exasperate their victorious invaders to the uttermost. The concourse of worshippers, which the anniversary of the Feast of the Passover had brought together from all parts of the land, necessitated a rapid consumption of the food at their disposal, and added to all their other calamities the terrible calamity of famine. Thus all the curses, which their own distinguished Lawgiver had been instructed in the days of old to insert admonitorily in the Book of the Law as evil things which should overtake them in the event of their national disobedience, came actually upon them, and the imprecation which, when Pilate publicly abjured all participation in the guilt of such blood-guiltiness as their

own, they had impiously challenged, took its full and fearful effect, "His blood be on us and on our children."

It is now all but eighteen hundred years ago since the house of Jerusalem's children was left unto them desolate. Long, indeed, is a period of eighteen centuries, especially if it is a period of eighteen centuries of indignant retribution. Thus, however, it has been with Jerusalem and her children. The former has been during all that period trodden down,—the latter during all that period scattered abroad. All which the sons and daughters of Zion have endured from one generation to another in all the countries whither they have been driven is only known to Him who, in the righteousness of his displeasure, drove them thither, and who, in the ubiquity of his omnipresence, has always witnessed all their affliction. The amount, however, of their national suffering, which

is known through the medium of divers independent testimonies, is more than enough to demonstrate the unpitied miseries, and the scornful contempt, under which they have been for ages everywhere sunk. Kings of Persia, emperors of Rome, caliphs of Arabia, Spain, France, and England, at divers stages of their history, princes of Germany, and crusaders of the Papacy, and gatherings of the populace whenever the spirit of their rulers was approved by the populace,—all these have conspired in helping forward the affliction of the Lord's Afflicted Ones, and in rendering their position, as long as it continues the same, incomparably miserable. We say, as long as it continues the same,—for

2. The Term of Jerusalem's Desolation Defined, "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." This expression, "the times," occurs in other places of New Testament

Scripture as well as in this. Thus we read of "the times of ignorance," "the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," "the times of restitution of all things," "the latter times," "the times before appointed," "the dispensation of the fulness of times." For in the evolution of the purpose, which took its rise in the mind of the Eternal before the world had been made, which was to be the scene of that evolution, it could not but be that certain stages should present themselves remarkable for their importance and interest. Of this kind were the Deluge in the days of Noah ; the Call of Abraham ; the Exodus from Egypt ; the Publication of the Law from Mount Sinai ; the Captivity of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, and the Return of the Two Tribes ; the Ministry of the Baptist ; the Mission of the Son of Man ; the Effusion of the Holy Ghost ; the Destruction of Jerusalem. All of these

were in respect of importance and interest remarkable events, and as it were so many processes in the execution of the Great Design, through which the manifold wisdom of God is to be at length illustriously displayed. So in like manner as regards the Future now. There are certain "times and seasons," each of which, at the period and through the circumstances of its own revealings, will be a further manifestation of the same Design.

And here the question naturally suggests itself, as to whether we are keeping within the range of legitimate inquiry, when we seek to ascertain for ourselves what these "times and seasons" are. That we ought, as the professed disciples of the Truth as it is in Jesus, to exercise ourselves in those revelations of the mystery of Christ which have already been opened up to our view is at once admitted, and to remain wilfully igno-

rant of them is felt to be an act of culpable unconcern and neglect. But is it also an act of culpable unconcern and neglect to leave the futurities of the Scheme of Redemption altogether unexplored, until they shall stand forth disclosed in the light of fulfilment, or is it one of the privileges, and therefore one of the duties, of all to whom the lively oracles of the Most High have been committed to occupy their thoughts, as the opportunities of such information may arise, on "things to come?"

Verily this is an inquiry of no small moment, and its answer may be briefly found in the language which the Apostle Paul employs in his Epistles to the Thessalonian Believers. He reminds them that "of the times and the seasons there was no need that he should write unto them," for they were not like the world out of which they had been called "in darkness, that the day

of the Lord should overtake them as a thief." He moreover furnishes us with an illustration of the knowledge which the saints in Thessalonica possessed of things which were to be hereafter. Of such things the predicted Apostacy was one, and, in order to the revelation of the Man of Sin in his time, the taking out of the way of the Roman Status was another. These things however *they* understood clearly as prophetic conditions which would be duly met after their own manner of development, so that he could not only ask them, in the form of interrogatory appeal, "Remember ye not that when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" but could also add, in the form of affirmative testimony, "and now ye know what withholdeth."

Or, to use a passage which has been urged in contravention of this view for the purpose of its confirmation. When the Apostles of the Lord, during one of those many inter-

views with him with which they were favoured after his resurrection, inquired of him whether he would at that time restore again the kingdom to Israel, he told them in reply that "it was not for them to know the times or the seasons which the Father had put in his own power." What then? Were they, in the intention of this reply, shut out from the hope of any new information on the subject to which their question referred, and forbidden ever afterwards to take up the times and seasons of the Divine Purpose as a theme of their thought or teaching? So far from this, the disciples of the Thessalonian Church, and, if of that Church, doubtless the disciples of other churches also, had been so thoroughly instructed in these very seasons and times that they were under no further necessity of instruction respecting them, while the Apostle of the Gentiles sets himself to restrain the churches of the Gentiles from being wise in

their own conceits on the ground that, when
“ their own fulness shall have come in, the
blindness which is in part happened unto
Israel shall cease, and all Israel be saved.”
“ The things which must shortly come to pass”
engage far the greater portion of the book
which, because of the mysteries of which it
treats, is distinctively termed the Book of the
Revelation, and yet, instead of a commendation
being awarded unto those who, because
it treats of such mysteries, refrain from the
study of it, “ blessed rather is he that readeth
and they that hear, the words of this
prophecy, and keep the things which are
written therein.” It is therefore according
to the Will of God that the children of God
should, in the spirit of meekness, attempt to
satisfy themselves when “ thoughts come into
their mind as to what shall come to pass
hereafter.”

As then to the *Times* which the Lord

himself mentions in our verse, "the Times of the Gentiles." What are they? We understand by them the period which is embraced between the temporary rejection and the ultimate recall of the Nation to which the Redeemer of mankind belonged. When the Gospel of the Kingdom was taken from them agreeably to the admonition conveyed in one of the parables of their own Messiah—when, in obedience to the commandment of the Risen Jesus, the Apostles whom he had chosen went forth into all the world, and preached repentance and remission of sins among all nations in his name—when, the people of Israel to whom he was first preached having put away from them the message of salvation, and thereby judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life, that message was made known to every creature, then, through the reversed positions of Jew and Gentile, a new arrangement was introduced—the times commenced

which were, and still are, in contrast with those which had gone before, even the times of the engraftation of the Gentiles into the olive-tree, from which the Jews had been judicially broken off.

Such a reversal of positions as this was the very last thing of which any ancient Israelite had dreamed. The Lord of Apostles, when he saw his own nation using himself as a Stone of stumbling over which to fall instead of a Foundation Stone on which to stand securely, could rejoice in the assurance that through their fall salvation would come unto the Gentiles. "And there were certain *Greeks* among them that came up to worship at the feast. The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew, and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. **And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour**

is come that the Son of man should be glorified." Not so, however, for a while the Apostles of the Lord. Though they had been directed in the express terms of their commission to preach the glad tidings of reconciliation to every creature, yet could they not believe that unto the Gentiles also God would give repentance unto life. It was only in obedience to a heavenly vision, which taught him not to call anything common which God had cleansed, nor to conceive of God as though he were a respecter of persons, that Peter went to the house of the Gentile, Cornelius, and admitted him and his through the ordinance of baptism into the visible membership of the Church. But when they had acquired a more intelligent knowledge in the mystery of Christ, and understood that of that mystery one glorious development was that "the Gentiles should be fellow-

heirs, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel," the exultation of their Master on this behalf became their own, and they could joy beyond measure in the great grace given unto them in that they were permitted to "preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

These Times—these Gentile Times—still continue, and therefore Jerusalem is still "trodden down," for Jerusalem is to be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. When, however, those times shall be, not as they now are in process of fulfilment, but actually fulfilled—when there shall have been gathered out of their last generation all who must be gathered into the fold of the Good Shepherd—when the end of this our Gentile Dispensation shall have been answered—then Jerusalem shall be released from the bondage of her long humiliation—the foot of the

heathen shall be removed from off her neck—the dust of her present prostration shall be shaken off—“her judges shall be restored as at the first, and her counsellors as at the beginning. Afterwards she shall be called, The City of Righteousness, The Faithful City.” Then,

1. We have here once again the Word of Prophecy before us in the strict Literality of its Accomplishment. That which the Lord Jesus spake concerning Jerusalem happened precisely as he spake it. He was not found to have described in strong figurative language some unprecedented calamity which was to overtake it, but to have detailed minutely the particulars of the calamity impending. It was compassed with armies. The saints which were in Judea fled to the mountains, and, under the guidance of their Lord's precautionary injunction, escaped the overthrow in which all others were involved.

It was a woeful visitation unto those who were with child, and who gave suck to the infants of their maternal affection in those days. Great distress was in the land, and wrath upon the people thereof. The sword devoured many, how many who shall recount? and captivity, scarcely less cruel, probably more cruel than the sword, swallowed up the survivors as its prey. Not one stone of the temple, or of the magnificent buildings by which it was surrounded, was left as a memorial of their greatness and glory. The desolations of the city and of the country abide unto this hour. If any nation was ever reduced to the degraded condition of the "down-trodden," it is the nation of whom, as concerning the flesh, the Christ came. The Gentiles have possessed, and are possessing, the Truth which they refused. Shall not then the rest of the Lord's words be also literally verified?

Shall not the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled? Shall not Jerusalem, when those times have been fulfilled, cease to be trodden down?

Lastly, of the things which we have now spoken this is the sum. It pleased Him whose over-ruling Providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth, to suffer all nations during many ages to walk in their own ways, and to commit unto one nation alone, the seed of Abraham as pertaining to the flesh, his oracles of inspiration. That Nation however, having been during those ages submitted to the test, was found faithless to its trust, and was plucked from off the face of the good land which the Lord God of their fathers had given them. The relative positions of Jew and Gentile were thenceforth reversed. Instead of one nation being favoured with the privileges of grace, the glad announcements of that grace were made

known unto all nations, and the Gospel of the Kingdom which had been taken from the one was communicated to the rest. Antecedently to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the desolation of the land of which it was the metropolis, that Gospel had been preached throughout the whole of the then known world, one single apostle being able to testify that "from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the Gospel of Christ." The nations, however, in the mass, like the Hebrew nation in particular, have been found in their turn faithless to their trust, most of the peoples of Christendom being apostates from the faith which was primitively delivered unto the saints, not so much as one of its peoples being really converted and sanctified. And so, numerous centuries having transpired, tokens are presenting themselves that a new phase of the Divine dealing with men is about

to be witnessed. What is that phase prophetically to be? The voices of the prophets leave no room for indecision. It is the restoration of the kingdom unto Israel. It is the solution of the mystery as to why they were all collectively concluded in unbelief, even in order that, in the day of their reconciling, he might have mercy collectively on them all. This is the *End* whose near approach the signs of our own times are believed to denote—not the end of all things here below, as though there should be no more any earth or objects pertaining thereunto—but the end of things as they are now seen to be—the gathering out of the kingdom of the Son of Man all things which offend and them which do iniquity, in order that the righteous may shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father—the End of our Gentile Times—the End of Jerusalem's down-treading connectedly with the wide-

spread judgments upon Christendom which the prophets have foreshown. Having been thus foreshown, those judgments must be poured out. Their issue however is blessed. Let only the time of that tribulation reach its close, and then the Gentiles and his ancient people shall rejoice together, and there shall be brought to pass that which had been written.

“But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever, and thy remembrance unto all generations. Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion, for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. For he hath looked down from his sanctuary, from heaven did the Lord behold the earth,

to declare the name of the Lord in Zion
and his praise in Jerusalem, when the people
are gathered together, and the kingdoms to
serve the Lord.”

CHAPTER VI.

ACTS xv. 13—18.

And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me : Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

WE were reminded, in the course of our last meditation, that there is a period which the Lord Jesus himself designated “the times of the Gentiles,” during the continuance of which Jerusalem was to be trodden down of the Gentiles, and at the close of which the same Jerusalem will be restored. We observed at the same time that there are not a

few spiritually-minded and thoughtful men whom the peculiar events of our own age have deeply impressed, and who are well persuaded in themselves that these our Gentile Times are all but fulfilled.

And now it will assist us in discerning the connexion which there is between the present dispensation of God towards us Gentiles, and the promised dispensation of God towards the Jews, if we consider from the words before us.

1. The Design of the Gracious Visitation which has been so long vouchsafed unto the Gentiles.

2. The Favour which, when the season of the Gentile Visitation has expired, is so specially reserved for the Jews ; and,

3. The Knowledge unto which both these arrangements concerning Gentile and Jew are to be so reasonably traced ;
and should it be that He, “ who ruleth in

Jacob and unto the ends of the earth," is about as it were to come once again out of his place, and overrule the present unsettled aspect of Europe and the East to the new honour of his ancient people, may we ourselves, instead of being high-minded, rather stand in awe of the overwhelming judgments by which that new condition of the world's affairs, when it does arrive, is to be ushered in, and at the same time sustain our faith by the prospect of the universal blessedness which is to ensue, as soon as the indignation of those judgments shall be overpast.

1. The Design of the Gracious Visitation which has been so long vouchsafed unto the Gentiles. "And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me. Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name." The occasion of these words was this.

Certain Judaizing teachers, neither understanding what they said, nor whereof they affirmed, had insisted on the circumcision of the Gentile brethren, on the ground that circumcision after the manner of Moses was indispensable to their salvation. Accordingly Paul and Barnabas, well aware that thus to insist was nothing less than to lay another foundation than that which God had laid in Zion, and earnestly desirous that the Truth of the Gospel should continue with all who had received it, laboured with the utmost zeal to convince those teachers of their error and its dangers. All their disputation however having proved of no avail, they determined to refer the question to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. Those apostles therefore and those elders came together for the purpose of its deliberate consideration. Peter first addressed the council, reminding them of the heavenly vision through which he had

himself been called to open the door of faith unto the Gentiles, declaring that God had seen good to put no difference between the Jew and the Greek, inasmuch as he had communicated to both alike the gift of the same faith, and affirming that to impose upon the neck of the disciples in other lands in the form of circumcision a yoke, which neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear, would be in effect to tempt God. Thereupon all the multitude keeping silence, Barnabas and Paul next rehearsed what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the nations by their own ministry, at the conclusion of which rehearsal the Apostle James delivered the address of which our present verses form a part.

This address he commenced by adopting, as worthy of all acceptation, the account which Simeon had given of the Divine Pleasure concerning the conversion of the Gentiles,

and of the manner in which that Pleasure had been communicated. He pointed out also the object for which the Nations at large had now at length been invited to glorify God for his mercy, even that there might be gathered out from among them a people by whom and through whom the name of God, as the God of Salvation, might be exalted—not that all the nations should as yet remember themselves, and turn unto the Lord, and worship before him with an holy worship—but that there might be gathered out from among them a people for his name. He could not but remember the instruction which their Master, before he suffered, had conveyed to them in this matter, when he advertised them that the Gospel should be preached unto all nations previously to Jerusalem's destruction for a *testimony*—not for their conversion, but for a testimony—nor could the same Master, for the space of forty days after his

resurrection, converse with them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and not explain to them in connexion therewith the place in the execution of the Divine Purpose which the call of the Gentiles was to occupy.

It is well for us to have a right understanding in all things, and therefore in this thing among the rest. The opportunity of such understanding is hereby afforded us. There is made known to us the view which the apostles of the Lord and Saviour entertained of the economy under which we ourselves, as Gentiles, are found. That view of it was as an economy under which there would be taken out from among the Gentiles a Gentile-Firstfruits, even as there had been previously taken out from among themselves as Hebrews a Hebrew-Firstfruits. With this view the result has literally corresponded. No nation has up to this moment,

after the protracted period of so many centuries, been as a nation converted to the faith. All which has taken place in each nation from one age to another has been "the salvation of some."

2. The Favour which, when the season of the Gentile Visitation has expired, is so specially reserved for the Jews. "And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written, after this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up, that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things." The Prophet from the book of whose testimony the above citation is made was Amos. The citation itself however is but an extract in brief, and the force of the reasoning of the New Testament Apostle will

the more fully appear if we transcribe both the context by which the extract is preceded, and that by which it is concluded. The *one* is, "Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful Kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth, saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord. For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us." The *other* is, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed, and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities,

and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof, they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of the land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.”—Amos ix. 8—15.

When then the words which James selected from the book of this prophet are taken in their entire connexion, we learn from his use of them his discernment of “the time then present” He perceived, through the signs by which his own times were characterised, that, with the exception of a remnant according to the election of grace, the Nation to which he himself and those assembled with him belonged was about to be broken off because of unbelief. He would therefore have the members of the council whom he was addressing, and all everywhere to whom the report of its consultation

might be conveyed, to accept the admission of the Gentiles into the Church of God as one of the developments of the Redemption Plan, and, so far from sanctioning the efforts of those who were seeking to bring them under this yoke of ceremonial bondage, to assist them rather in standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and to joy together with them therein. In the meanwhile, as respected the sad dispersion of their own people as strangers and outcasts into all lands, let them comfort themselves with the assurance which the Lord God of the Prophets had given them of the arrival of an appointed day in the which the breaches of the tabernacle of David should be closed up, and it should be raised up from its ruins to flourish more gloriously than in the days of old, and that for ever.

Such had been the Divine Promise by the

mouth of Amos, nor by the mouth of Amos alone, but by that of many other prophets also, for, while the apostle reminded his fellow-apostles and the multitude of the brethren of the very words which the one prophet had employed, he reminded them also that the voices of the rest had been in agreement with them. "And to this agree the words of the prophets." How universal their testimony as concerning the national recovery and blessedness which are in store for Israel, who that has any familiar knowledge of their writings does not know? To extract this their testimony would be to transcribe no small portion of what they have written. Our selections from the books which bear their names must needs be brief.

What saith Esaias? "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children

of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the *Gentiles*, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Fear not; for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time.”—Isaiah liv. 1—4 and lx. 21, 22.

What saith Jeremiah? “Hear the word of the Lord, O ye *nations*, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel

will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah, and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness.”—Jer. xxxi. 10—12 and 23.

What saith Ezekiel? “And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them ; I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land : and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing ; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season ; there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands off their yoke, and delivered them out of the hands of those that served themselves of them. And they shall be no more a prey to the *heathen*, neither shall the beasts of the land devour them ; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will raise up for

them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. Thus shall they know that I the Lord their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord God. And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God.”—Ezek. xxxiv. 23—31.

What saith Hosea? “The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterwards shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.”—Hosea iii. 4—5.

What saith Micah? “According to the days

of the coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvellous things. The *nations* shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old."—Micah vii. 15—20.

What saith Zephaniah? "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in *every land* where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord." —Zeph. iii. 14—20.

What saith Zechariah? "Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jeru-

saalem shall be called a city of truth ; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain. Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country ; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem : and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.”—Zech. viii. 3, 7, 8.

Surely, when all these promises of blessing and glory which abound with so much varied profusion in the Scriptures of their prophets, and of which the few produced are but a sample, shall have become theirs in the form of actual fulfilment; the Tabernacle of David, so long ruined and fallen, will have been indeed renewed, and when, introductorily to such a fulfilment, the Nations of the earth, to whom the Gospel of the Kingdom had been so long given, but who had failed to bring forth the fruits worthy of it, shall have been judged

and rooted out, "the residue of men" will seek after the Lord God of Jacob, and all the Gentiles upon whom his name is called. Then "the mountain of the Lords' house having been established in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, all nations shall flow unto it." Then "Israel itself shall not only blossom and bud, but shall also fill the face of the whole world with fruit." Then "ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." Then "shall be gathered all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see his glory." There has been as yet no accomplishment of these manifold pledges, but they are the pledges of the Faithful Promiser. The foundation of them standeth sure. They are all of them sealed with Jehovah's seal.

Not so much as one of them shall in any wise fall to the ground.

3. The Knowledge unto which both these arrangements concerning Gentile and Jew are to be so reasonably traced, "Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world,"—a statement this of which no individual, who really believes in God as the God of Revelation, desires any laboured proof, and which therefore we may at once confidently leave in the conclusive simplicity of its own affirmation. It carries in the very utterance of it its own demonstration. Still it is profitable for us that it should be from time to time brought back to our remembrance, because we are so apt to forget it, and because, while it is not present to our mind, its beneficial influence is lost to us. It is well for us, when engaged in surveying the Mystery of Redemption under its past and present aspects, or

when engaged in anticipating its promised exhibitions, to bear in mind that the arrangements of Creation and of Providence are connected with and subordinate to it—that the Mystery itself is the Master-Scheme of the Eternal One—that all the stages of its progressive manifestation are in their measure and season precisely as he designed them from the first—and that thus it will continue to be until the glorious Plan shall stand forth, before the eyes of angels and of saints, the Perfected Display of the manifold Wisdom of God.

And now, as that which has been the main purport of our present thoughts, let us learn to view in their distinctness from each other, and yet to keep in their connexion with each other, the call of the Gentiles and the recall of the Jews. The Jews as a People still subsist. They are known to be many, very many, in number in our own

days. They are indeed scattered throughout the world, in some places more, and in some fewer, but, if they could be collected together from the midst of every nation under heaven, they would be seen to be in respect of their multitude a Nation themselves. They shall be yet thus gathered together, as it is written of them. The Most High has for this very purpose concluded them all in unbelief together, that, in the hour of their happy visitation, he may have mercy upon them all. That hour of happy visitation will surely come. The language which the God of Abraham has addressed to the seed of Abraham is the language of divine sincerity. “Thy Maker is thine husband—the Lord of hosts is his name, and thy Redeemer, the Holy one of Israel—the God of the whole earth shall be called. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with ever-

lasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me, for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." These sons and daughters of Zion, even when regarded in their state of dispersion, are nevertheless spoken of by the prophets in their national oneness. Thus their dispensation and ours stand forth in contrast with each other—*we*, many nations, from the midst of which an innumerable company of Saved Ones is being gathered out, *they*, one nation, reserved unto a universal ingathering. Then, when the close of our

dispensation shall have proved the commencement of theirs, "the Blessing of Abraham" shall descend upon the Gentiles in its fulness, and *that* become the scene of actual demonstration which is as yet the subject of apostolical reasoning. "If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, *how much more* their fulness! For if the *casting away* of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the *receiving* of them be, but life from the dead?" So, the other sheep which were not of that fold having been brought, the Gentiles shall rejoice with his people, and, while they glorify God for his mercy together, there shall be One Fold and One Shepherd. It is in the remembrance of God's mercy and truth towards the house of Israel that the interests of all the children of men are included, nor can the whole earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as

the waters cover the sea, until the recollection of Israel's deliverance from Egypt in the days of old shall have been as it were swallowed up in that greater and more glorious deliverance.

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord Our Righteousness. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, which brought up, and which led the *seed* of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.”—Jer. xxiii. 5—8.

CHAPTER VII.

MATT. XVI. 3.

Can ye not discern the signs of the times?

WE now close these meditations. It may however not be without its use if, as an introduction to our present subject, we offer a brief summary of them. We have then endeavoured to show that the Word of Prophecy is not only a sure, but also an intelligible word, if only we take heed unto it as unto a light shining in a dark place, desiring the measure of illumination which it supplies, and no more. We touched though but lightly on many predictions which have been more or less

recently accomplished, not only in their general outline, but even in their minutest details. We reviewed the Image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in a night-vision under its prophetic aspect, and, while the accuracy of its verifications was demonstrated, we drew the conclusion that but a very small remnant of the Period which it defined has now to transpire. We described, in the light of an interpretation which an apostle supplied, the nature of the World to come of which apostles spake, and we discovered the scene of its manifestation to be, not the Heaven above, but the Earth beneath. We recalled to remembrance the fact, that Jerusalem has been for a long succession of ages, and still is, trodden down of the Gentiles, but will cease to be trodden down any longer when the Times of the Gentiles, whose expiration is not improbably near at hand, have been fulfilled. We explained, through

the aid of another apostle's interpretation, that the object of the dispensation under which we ourselves are placed is not the conversion of the 'Gentiles to the faith of Christ, but the gathering out from among the nations a people unto the praise of the glory of God's grace—that when this our Gentile-Dispensation shall have closed, the time to favour the people of the ancient Zion will commence—and that, when the mystery of God shall be finished, all will have fallen out in strict agreement with the pleasure of Him who is “the Father of lights,” and with whom, whether as to purpose or performance, “there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

At this point we pause, our only aim having been to enable you to form some judgment as to what the point is in the Prophetic Roll at which we ourselves are standing, and now, with the view of giving

some practical effect to that which has been spoken, we propose to regard the question of our verse,

1. In its Original Application to the Jews—and,

2. In its Present Applicability to Ourselves—and may the teachings of the Word be savingly accompanied by the teachings of the Spirit, that so we may not turn away, either in prejudice or in heedlessness, from themes of such immediate and such everlasting moment, but rather prepare ourselves, as for the certainties of an approaching death, so for the probabilities of an approaching tribulation.

1. The Question of our verse in its Original Application to the Jews. "Can ye not discern the signs of the times?" This question was not a spontaneous one on the part of him who proposed it. Jesus did not address it of his own accord either to

an individual or to the multitude. It had been drawn from him in acknowledgment of a direct, and, as he well knew, ensnaring appeal which had had been made to him. The Pharisees and the Sadducees—the one, formal ritualists, the other, irreligious free-thinkers—parties whose sentiments were thoroughly antagonistic, and who could probably have combined together in no other act than that of opposing or entangling one who condemned alike, with all faithfulness, the licentiousness of the free-thinker, and the formality of the ritualist—these, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, had come to him, desiring a sign from heaven. Nothing could be more unreasonable than such a desire, for the signs which Jesus of Nazareth had multiplied in the midst of them within the limited compass of scarcely more than a single year were of the most decisive kind, and were more than enough to satisfy, if

only sincere and honest, the most scrupulous, the most critical observer. Nevertheless, they came to him desiring a sign from heaven, as though in attestation of his messengership he had never put forth any credentials at all, or as though the credentials which he had professedly put forth had been evidently defective, and therefore unsatisfactory.

Accordingly the Lord, perceiving that the spirit in which these persons had accosted him was not an ingenuous, but a captious spirit—that the object which they had in view was not to profit by his teaching but to entangle him in his talk—refused compliance with their request, and would not work in their presence any additional sign. Instead thereof, he remonstrated with them on the inconsistency which they betrayed, reminding them that when “in the evening” the sky was red, they said the weather was about to

be fair, and when, "in the morning" the same sky was red and lowering, that the weather of that day would be foul. Thus they could look upon the face of the sky, and gather from its appearance the kind of weather which was approaching, and could act in agreement with the conclusions at which experience had taught them to arrive, and could they not, in a matter of so much deeper concernment, look upon the status of their nation, and mark the peculiar aspect which it was assuming, and discern the signs of the times, and comport themselves agreeably thereto?

For the aspect of *their* times was peculiar, and its signs discernible enough to all who had eyes to see and hearts to consider them. "The sceptre was not to depart from Judah until Shiloh came," and was not their land already reduced to be a Roman Province under a Roman Governor, and so the sceptre

departed? Was not a Prophet to be raised up from among themselves like unto Moses, in whose mouth should be put the words of the Lord, and who should speak unto them all which was commanded him, and every despiser of whose voice should be cut off from the congregation of Israel, and had not a Prophet answering in every respect this description risen up among them? Had not a Virgin conceived, and brought forth a Son, and called his name Emmanuel? Had not a Rod come forth of the stem of Jesse and a Branch grown out of his roots? Had not the Spirit of the Lord rested upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord? Had it not been so seen of late in the midst of their own generation as had never been seen in the days of old, that the eyes even of the blind had been opened, and the ears even of the deaf

unstopped, and the lame man made to leap as the hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing? Had there not been heard the voice of one crying in the wilderness in order that the way of the Lord might be prepared? Had not the great Messenger of the covenant of the Lord of Hosts come unto his own, and were not his own refusing to receive him? Would not then all the evil things which, connectedly with these foreshewings concerning the Messiah, the prophets had foreshewed concerning the scorers of the Messiah, assuredly take effect? Was not the Shiloh really come? Would not the Lord require at the hand of every one who was not hearkening unto the words of this "greater than Moses" the recompence of his unbelief and hardness of heart? Yes—the demand of a yet further sign as though, if it were not granted, the evidences of the Christship of the Son of Man were insufficient, and as though, if it were

granted, they would then submissively believe, was nothing less than a demand of insolent opposition and of deliberate hypocrisy. If they would look around, and observe with any attentive reflection the tokens by which they were encompassed, they could not doubt for a moment the reality of his mission from God, while, if they would not do this, no token whatsoever which he could add would have any effect in persuading them to that new and holier life, the call to which had hitherto so greatly offended them. There was no more conclusive demonstration to which they could be referred respecting his Messiahship than "the signs of their times." Had such signs ever concurred before? Could such signs by any possibility ever concur again?

2. The Question of our verse in its Present Applicability to Ourselves, "Can ye not discern the signs of the times?" For these our

own times have *their* signs—not indeed the same signs, which could not be—but still signs of a like kind and of a like force—new revelations of the same Divine Purpose, new evolutions of the same Prophetic Roll, new Manifestations of the Kingdom of Him whom the Father delighteth to honour—signs which never concurred before—signs which can never concur again. These signs, what are they ?

The Near Downfall of the Ottoman Empire is a Sign of our times. That its downfall is near, not even the warmest advocates of its perpetuation would venture to question. It has now for some time been upheld by the powerful foreign support of other States whom the dread of its dissolution, and of the perplexities which its dissolution could not fail to induce, has constrained to combine for the purpose of upholding it. Had it not been for this, it would have been ere this absorbed

into the territory of the Czar. The successful revolt of so many dependencies—the jealous antipathy of the Greek to the Mussulman—the growing superiority of the former to the latter—the alienation of not a few remaining provinces from its rule—the exhaustion of its resources—the very reforms which have been introduced with the hope of maintaining it, but which can only prove as so many helps to its destruction—all these bespeak the approach of the hour in the which all devices for its preservation shall have failed, and the kingdom once renowned, like so many other kingdoms of renown, shall have passed away. The years of the dominion of the False Prophet are being numbered, and when a territory, so inexpressibly important to Europe and the world by reason of its position, becomes disengaged from the authority under which it is now held, and must needs be transferred through the partition of it into

the hands of others, who shall declare beforehand all the international strife of which it may be the cause? The difficulties which the most skilful diplomatists of the earth have encountered in their endeavours to keep it back from the disruption which threatened it will then have reached their uttermost entanglement.

The Condition of Papal Rome is a Sign of our times. The wrath, which her presumptuous pretensions, and her long misrule, and her accumulated wrongs have provoked, is fast gathering around her. The clouds of the impending tempest are dark and darkening. Already her own more immediate children, unable to endure any longer the yoke of her oppressions, are declaring their determination to break that yoke from off their neck—their firm and immutable determination. Whether they will be permitted at once to act out their determination to its

issue, or whether a confederacy of rulers shall for a while hold them back from their purpose, is as yet uncertain. Still, in either case, the days of the vengeance denounced are closely upon her. The arm on which she is already resting is not the attachment of her subjects, or the devotion of her troops within the borders of her own states, but the military aid of a foreign, and that a questionable, protector. Even the suggestion, than which none more full of evil omen could be made, has been made, to separate her civil from her ecclesiastical power. Such a separation, like any real reformation either in her claims or administration, would be fatal. The doom which she has earned must be met. When the Reformation achieved its great results, the shock sustained was severe indeed, but partial, for the hour was not then come. When the armies of France, during the wars

of her memorable revolution, passed through and wasted, the blow received was terrible, but not final, for the hour was not then come. Time, however, with its uniformity of progress, has now brought very nigh the hour itself. The sands of the period, during which the union of so much craft and so much tyranny was to be permitted to triumph, have all but run out. Those who have rendered, and are rendering their help, will themselves turn and rend her, as it is written. The judgment will shortly sit, and take away the dominion to consume and to destroy it unto the end.—Dan. vii. 26.

The Unsettled Feeling which pervades the world is a Sign of our times. The tone of that feeling is indeed not the same in all. With some it is hopeful, with others it is anxious. Many are dreading the general confusion, by more the general regeneration of society is expected. The overthrow of

long-established governments, and the subversion of the existing order of things, are apprehended by not a few, lest universal anarchy should succeed in their stead, whilst by not a few also the same overthrow and the same subversion are desired, as the only means of the deliverance of nations from the evils which depress them. The one or other of these emotions—either an alarm which dejects or a hope which cheers—is diffusing itself among all classes at home and abroad, and the fact that it is so is itself a social phenomenon by which the universal anticipation of some new and eventful Crisis is betokened.

The Union of so much Apparent Prosperity and so much Real Anxiety is a Sign of our times. This is a feature of our own age and generation which no thoughtful observer can well overlook. The impulse which the Human Mind has of late evidently

received—the educational activity which has ensued as its result—the inventions in all the Departments of practical science which every year develops—the velocity with which space is now traversed, and intelligence now transmitted, discoveries both of them so recent that we have not yet ceased to speak of them in terms of admiring astonishment—the extent, as well as ease, with which the varied products of lands most distant from each other are interchanged—all these serve to invest the present epoch of the world's history with an attractive and inspiring aspect, while, at the same time, the debts by which all its leading kingdoms are burdened and bowed down—the artificial arrangements of commerce and society—the perplexities of statesmen—the emancipation from thralldom, for which so many populations are groaning—occasions of jealousy between divers nations

—the doubt by which everything is everywhere overhung—present the same world under a contrary aspect, and seem to justify the forebodings of evil. Thus has it been brought providentially to pass that men shall be able to say, with what appears to be a just confidence, “Peace, Peace,” and yet the day be stealing imperceptibly on which is “to come as a snare on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.”

The Attitude of Hostile Preparation which so many Kingdoms have taken up is a Sign of our times. Not indeed in itself, but in combination. Not in itself, for in wars and rumours of wars there is nothing new or peculiar. The Records of our Race, whether Divine or Human, are little else than the records of strife. But, in combination, this attitude is a sign, seeing that when Israel's restoration is come, and the influx of the nations into the church of the one True

and Living God by which that restoration is to be followed is at hand, the blessed change is to be introduced by those battles of the warrior, every one of which is with confused noise and with garments rolled in blood. In that day, the Lord shall judge among the nations and rebuke *many* people, so that, under the constraint of that judgment and that rebuke, "they shall beat the swords, which they had been sharpening before, into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks—nation shall not as before lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." "Thy God, O Zion, hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee. Rebuke the company of spearmen, scatter thou the people that delight in war. Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands

unto God.”—Psalm lxviii. 28—31. If therefore there were at the present time no demonstration of spears and swords, and there were to be seen in no direction any who were learning war and delighting in it, we should know from the absence of this token that the expected end was not yet, but, combined as it is with other characteristic tokens, it contributes its own measure of confirmation, and strengthens the probability of the nearness of the issue which it is itself necessary to mature.

The Interest of the Gentile Churches in the welfare of God’s Ancient People is a Sign of our times. This is one of the marks by which the day of Israel’s recovery is scripturally defined. “Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion, for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.” Thus it is

with many of the servants of the Lord now. The stones and the dust of the down-trodden Jerusalem are precious in their sight. They are glad to labour and to pray for the welfare of any of her children in this dark day of their national humiliation. They are glad to remember the everlasting love with which they are divinely loved—glad to remember the illustrious ancestors from whom they are descended—glad to remember the glorious promises which are distinctively theirs—glad to remember that “of them the Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.” They understand that which so many do not yet understand, which they themselves peradventure for a while did not understand, how much the well-being of the whole Human Family is bound up in the recall of the Jews to the land of their forefathers—that, previously to that recall, the Gentile Conversions can only

be individual, and not national—and that it is only when God shall have become merciful unto *them*, and blessed *them*, and caused his face to shine upon *them*, that his way will be known universally upon earth, his saving health among all nations. Therefore they are accustomed to wait, in the midst of all their missionary earnestness and energy, for the promised ingathering of Israel, and, while they wait, they embrace thankfully every opportunity of doing any good to any of the seed of Abraham. How much this kind consideration of the Israelite now stands out in delightful contrast with the cruel persecution of the Israelite in the days which are past, who does not know? *Then* they were only a proverb and a bye-word among men—"only oppressed and crushed away." That this their reproach has been removed in any measure in any part of the earth, is an

earnest that all their reproach will in due time be removed from off all the earth. It is one of our tokens. And here we might add to those which have been mentioned other signs also. We might dwell on "the form of godliness, while the power of it is denied," which prevails so lamentably on every side—on the attacks, both open and subtle, by which the Word of the Testimony is from so many quarters assailed—on the increase of knowledge through the new facilities of its communication and attainment—on the dissatisfaction with the present arrangement of things of which so many symptoms are manifest in so many lands—on the efforts which are put forth of divers kinds for the subversion of that arrangement—on the persuasion which, notwithstanding the unsuccess of those efforts, is still cherished that some better condition of things here below is at hand—on the

attention to the Second Advent of the Lord, which current events are constraining—on the advanced period of its premillennial state unto which this world of our present pilgrimage has been now brought. These are all of them contributory marks of this our own generation, and therefore contributory helps by which we may ascertain the prophetic point at which, as a generation, we now are, but we refrain from any enlargement upon them, in order that we may conclude the whole subject with two or three appropriate, but brief, reflections.

1. How Instructive is the Word of Prophecy when humbly consulted! We trust that the consultation of it which we have lately made has been that of humility—that we are not chargeable with any attempt to strain or wrest it—that we have left it both to express its own terms and expound its own meaning—that the language of our interpre-

tation has been that, as of truth, so of sincerity. We cannot think that to the teachable disciple it has given forth no light. Let us then exercise ourselves more frequently therein. The events which it still foreshews we may usefully premeditate. The descent of the Lord Jesus from heaven with a shout—the binding of Satan for a thousand years—the thousand years of righteousness—the first resurrection—the loosing of Satan once again at the close of the Millennium—the consignment of him to the lake of fire into which the beast and false prophet had been cast—the revelation of the great white throne and of Him that sat upon it—the judgment of all the dead, both small and great—the great and final consummation—these will all furnish unto the inquirer, who does not exercise himself in matters too high for him, but whose soul is even as a weaned child, the material of knowledge, and warning, and com-

fort, and joy. They are all of them words which have proceeded out of the mouth of God, and “by *every* word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live.” The just shall live by faith, not only become alive unto God by a first faith in the Son of his love, but continue more and more vigorously alive unto God by new exercises of faith in the things which pertain to the kingdom of that Son. Do all such not faint? Though their outward man may perish, is their inward man nevertheless renewed day by day? Does their affliction, however sore and however protracted after man’s judgment, seem unto themselves light and but for a moment, working out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? Then all this is while “they look not at the things which are seen and which are temporal, but at the things which are *unseen* and which are eternal.”

2. How Vain is the Contempt of the Sinful for that Fearful Warning which the Word of Prophecy gives forth ! For it is a fearful warning. What is it ? More or less of affliction, perhaps even much affliction, or perhaps even nothing but affliction in this present evil world—then the death unto which all men are appointed—then the intermediate state to which pertains “no more sacrifice for sins, but only a fearful looking for of the fiery indignation which is to devour the adversaries—after that, the judgment to which all are reserved—then the eternity as to which, though a condemned one, there is to be no change. Such is the warning—the Fearful Warning. Can our forgetfulness of it either arrest or alter its execution ? Those who were disobedient in the days of Noah treated with contempt the righteousness of which Noah was unto them the preacher, but,

when the hundred and twenty years of God's forbearance were expired, did not the flood suddenly descend, and sweep them all away? Those among whom the Son of Man appeared disdained his ministry, the voices of their prophets, and the ministration of the Spirit, but did not the threatened vengeance overtake them in all its bitterness as well as in all its suddenness, and has not their house been thenceforth left unto them desolate? And if any, in the midst of these our own signs, are scorers now, or disobedient now, what then? Then "behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

Lastly, How Wise are they who exercise themselves in the Word of Prophecy with a view to their own Holier Preparation!

There is no study more solemnizing, more sanctifying than this. The wonders which it discloses are of the highest order, far higher than any which Science in its proudest discoveries can reveal. The mind, which is brought into contact with the revelations of Science, is in very deed brought into contact with the Creator through the developments of his Intelligence in their manifold variety, but the mind, which is brought into contact with the revelations of Prophecy, is brought into contact with the Creator through those developments of his Intelligence in which he most glories, most delights. Verily, there is no Christian attainment, the increase of which in himself any child of God can desire, to the increase of which the Word of Prophecy is not suited, and, we will add, intended to minister. Is it a deeper humility of mind which he

seeks? Then amidst its nobler and inspiring scenes he will realize more and more the meanness of his creature insignificance, and the vastness of his covenant-obligation. Is it a more practical contempt of those earthly things on which he is evangelically commanded not to set his affection? Then in the contemplation of the fiery deluge by which the earth, and all the things which are therein, are to be burned up, and of the glad and beautiful Regeneration which is to succeed, all that is in the world will not only be, but will also be felt to be, a transitory shadow, not worthy to be compared with "the better and enduring substance." Is it a stronger Faith? Then from the truths therein unfolded may be derived the weightiest confirmations of faith. Is it a more earnest concern for the unbelieving and disobedient? Then the madness and misery of all such are *there* most affect-

ingly exposed. Is it a still warmer love for the brethren ? Then *there* also are most attractively set forth the dignity of their adoption, the gladness of their inheritance, the immortality of their fellowship. Is it a more patient waiting for Christ ? Then in the glory which is to be revealed more than in ought besides will the sufferings of the present time be absorbed, and even sweetened. Is it a more assured Preparation ? Then all the motives which can commend or constrain preparation are concentrated there. In this "more sure Word of Prophecy" then let every disciple of the True Wisdom, every heir of the True Blessedness, indulge his meditation. The God of hope will, through the instrumentality of that meditation, fill him with all joy and peace in believing, that he may abound in hope amidst the tribulations of his warfare, and, when that Hope of the ..

Saints, for which during so many ages they have all looked, shall be realized, its realization will be the answer of the Prayer which during so many ages they have all offered up—

“THY KINGDOM COME. THY WILL BE DONE
IN *earth* AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.”

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